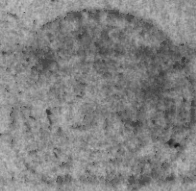

THE
CHURCH OF ST. SIFFRID.



THE

CHURCH OF ST. SHEPHERD



THE
CHURCH OF ST. SIFFRID.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

Non mesto, non valor, non riverenza
Nè d'età nè di grado, nè di legge;
Non peno di vergogna; non rispetto
Nè d'amor nè di sangue; non memoria
Di ricevuto ben, nè finalmente
Cosa si venerabile, o si santa,
O si giusto esser può, ch'a quella vasta
Cupidigia d'honori, a quella ingorda
Fama d'aver, violabil sia.

GUARINI.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR G. G. AND J. ROBINSON,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1797.



THE

CHURCH OF ST. MARY.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

By the Rev. J. H. ...
... of the ...
... of the ...
... of the ...
... of the ...
... of the ...
... of the ...
... of the ...
... of the ...
... of the ...

Vol. I.

Vol. II.

LONDON.

PRINTED FOR G. AND J. COLLIERSON.

STATIONERS' COURT.

1857.



THE
CHURCH OF ST. SIFFRID.

C H A P. XXXIV.

He that has light within his own clear breast
May sit i'th' centre, and enjoy bright day :
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun ;
Himself is his own dungeon.—

Conus.

AFTER Lord Carlovile's departure
from the Castle, Llewellyn renewed his
search for Ethelreda. Though he fa-
voured Carlovile's opinion of her hav-
ing escaped, he himself was satisfied she
was still in the Castle ; though even he,
acquainted as he was with every wind-
ing and corner of it, was at a loss and

VOL. III.

B

bewildered

bewildered where he should search for her. He had recollected from the moment of her being missed, that in several rooms of the Castle were deep cavities in the walls, some of which were secured by doors, and others only hidden by the tapestry. These deep hollow dungeons, which appeared to run like chimneys from the top to the very foundation of the building, had never been explored in Llewellyn's time; nor indeed was there any possible mode, apparently, of descending those into which in former days he had ventured to peep, except by ropes and pulleys. If therefore Ethelreda had mistaken her way, and fallen into one of these caverns, her death was the inevitable consequence. But how to relieve himself from the miserable anxiety he suffered from the supposition, Llewellyn did not know: for his head was so crammed with the stories of ghosts, that when he lifted up
the



the tapestry at the lower end of the library, and saw a deep hole, dark as the grave, into which his lantern cast no ray of light to encourage his proceeding, he almost died with fear. It was not till after repeated efforts he could raise his voice so as to hear it himself; and the deep hollow groans which were echoed back to him from the bottom of the dungeon were not calculated to dispel his horror. Whilst Llewellyn stood hesitating, and leaning with one hand against the rugged wall, with his eyes poring into the black dismal gulf, a small loosened stone gave way, and he heard it fall two or three times as if from step to step; a second experiment confirmed the fact, for he reckoned a larger stone roll down six steps, and stop as at a little distance. Nothing was wanting now but more light; and Winifred having supplied herself with an ad-

ditional lantern, which from the damps that hovered round them bestowed a very small portion of light, they groped their way down a stone staircase of about half a dozen steps. A low narrow passage at least forty feet in length next presented itself, at the end of which a gleam of moon-light through an aperture in the wall discovered the beginning of another flight of steps; these they descended, and, as at the termination of the preceding, appeared another passage still longer, at the distant end of which they heard footsteps: and as they advanced something ran, or rather flitted, from them towards the end of the gallery; when another gleam of light shewed Llewellyn, who preceded his wife, a figure which he believed to be no other than the Pilgrim Knight of Famagusta, who was on his way back to his sepulchre in Cyprus before day-break,

break, after having paid his accustomed visit to his castle and the for ever separate vault of his ancestors.

Though Llewellyn began to tremble in every joint, and had a violent inclination to turn back; yet he had no sooner ventured to look behind him, than, fancying he saw the gleamy helmet of Sir Reginald the Knight Templar, he was constrained to quicken his pace—not in so much fear of being obliged to join company with the Pilgrim, who he concluded was already many miles off, as of being overtaken by the Templar, particularly as he heard him clanking down the steps in his iron gyves at a great rate. Under such an impression of fear, Llewellyn, in spite of his age, had presently left Winifred behind him, had not she, though not aware of the horrors that spurred her husband, quickened her pace in proportion: but, notwithstanding his terror, he began to be

weary of running through a rugged vault which appeared to be endless, and which, from his knowledge of its limits, must already have extended beyond the confines of the Castle. Add to which, the candles in their lanterns, that from their small size burned speedily, began to wink in their sockets. They were unprovided for such a disaster; the merciless Templar still clanked behind, or rather the echo of their footsteps still followed them, when Llewellyn stumbled and almost fell by striking his feet against something that impeded his progress. He lifted up his dying lantern, and saw they had now to ascend steps. He had already advanced a little way, when the falling of a ponderous weight above him, which was accompanied by a gust of wind, fanned out the before departing flame of their candles, and almost annihilated them.

There was now no hope of a retreat,
and

and nothing was to be expected from daylight, as they had long taken leave of the little loops that let in the glimmering of the moon. Llewellyn stood some moments to breathe; then all at once collecting courage from the dead silence that prevailed, with violent expedition he gained the top, so overcome with terror and exertion, that, unable to support himself, he fell with his whole weight against a heavy nailed door, whose rusty mouldering lock gave way, and he found himself in the watch-tower—at the feet of Ethelreda!

It was Winifred speaking to her husband who first discovered to the terrified Ethelreda who were her pursuers; for at the violent intrusion of Llewellyn she hastily retreated to the farther end of the room, where a small grated window helped to show her pale and trembling form to the overjoyed Winifred. “My dear lady, is it you? Have we found

you?" said she, approaching her mistress.

"Oh! Winifred! who is following?" cried Ethelreda panting and breathless with her terror and flight. "Are you alone? Am I safe?" repeated she.

"Here is no one, madam, but your faithful servant Llewellyn," said the old man, advancing towards the window.

"And where are the lights that pursued me through the vault?" said Ethelreda, still fearing something behind.

Winifred and Llewellyn both assured her, Carloville was gone, and entreated her to return with them to the Castle. After repeated assurances of his departure she consented; but now she recollected dropping in her flight one of the keys with which she had furnished herself from a nail in the library, which proved to be that one that opened the door of the tower into the park. As the event proved, the loss was not a serious one. Though both the servants dreaded

the

the necessity of returning through the vaulted passage to the Castle, and would willingly have chosen any other; yet upon deliberation it occurred to them, the gates of the Castle were still more inaccessible from without, than that of the tower from within. They reluctantly descended the stairs of the vault, and, after much complaining and fatigue, once more found themselves and Ethelreda, by the grey twilight of the morning, safe in the library.

For some moments the timorous servants could express nothing but surprise at Ethelreda's astonishing courage, in venturing into the cavern, particularly as she told them its existence was only known to her by her father's report. She told them too, it was her original intention to have discovered the subterraneous passage to Carloville, and to have proposed the watch-tower, on account of its communication with the

Castle, and its being useless and unfrequented, for her future residence. But since he had been so easily exasperated to break his first promise, she rejoiced in the accident of his being still ignorant of this vault, which none could discover to him but Llewellyn and his wife, both of whom she called upon for a promise of secrecy, which they readily gave; and which she had every reason to believe, when once given, they would hold inviolably sacred.

Ethelreda took this precaution, because she apprehended both Winifred and Llewellyn would revolt against the resolution she was about to communicate to them, and hold it their duty, unless bound by promises to the contrary, to divulge the place of her retreat to her sister or Mr. Harwood; whilst on the other hand she was desirous that not only her abode, but her very name, should be forgotten and unknown. The watch-

watch-tower had once been fitted up by Sir Roger for the residence of his game-keeper ; but not long before his death he had furniture brought him from the Castle for his own accommodation. There he used to pass sometimes three days together unseen by his family, from whence his sudden return to his own apartment without the knowledge of the vigilant porter, was matter of great speculation amongst the servants, to whom this passage was a profound secret. The lower room of the tower, which communicated with the vault, was entirely separated from the one over it except by a trap-door, which could easily be concealed by a piece of furniture.

Ethelreda, who had already arranged her plan, left the execution of it to Llewellyn, who, according to her directions, furnished the lower room for her reception ; whilst, in spite of the prayers and remonstrances of her faithful ser-

vants, she held herself in readiness to retire to her prison on the first notice of Lord Carlovill's arrival.

In the mean time, however, Ethelreda passed her melancholy hours at large in the solitary rooms of the Castle. She wandered day after day through all those apartments where she had passed so many hours with her father, the Harwoods, and Conway.

More than a month had elapsed since Ethelreda's arrival at this deserted mansion: and still as the spring advanced every moment grew more precious to her, passed at large within its walls; since every moment that fled brought her still nearer to the time of her imprisonment. It was with regret indeed that she looked forward to the reception of a master so unworthy within these venerable walls, which it was impossible to think of quitting, or of seeing for the last time those rooms where she had passed

passed the happiest hours of her youth. Yet her resolution never wavered even in thought; she applauded her own steadiness, and persuaded herself she acted worthy the name of L'Esterling; and even imagined, with a fanciful and romantic pride, she could have supported, if possible, greater misfortunes with superior fortitude when the honour of that name was concerned, or even if that name had still been her own.

C H A P. XXXV.

— to wilful men,

The injuries that they themselves procure
Must be their schoolmasters. —

SHAKESPEARE.

LORD Carlovile's first intention was to have returned to St. Siffred's Castle immediately after his conference with Sir Francis L'Esterling and Mr. Harwood, in order to secure the person of Ethelreda, whose retreat he had left Llewellyn in strict charge to discover. But his journey was postponed by the intelligence of his colleague, Lady Mariamne, who, having heard of Conway's sudden disappearance, made no scruple to say she was assured Ethelreda was already under his protection.

Lady

Lady Mariamne, who intended this calumny should be universally received for truth, in order to exasperate the spirit of Carlovillé still more against his unhappy wife, took particular care to spread the story, so that in the course of a few days it came to the hearing of Mr. Conway, who, hampered by his own schemes, could not deny the fact, as he would willingly have done to prevent its reaching his brother's family, lest the denial should lead to the knowledge of Conway's actual situation. Besides, it was Lady Mariamne's intention by any means in her power to separate Carlovillé and Ethelreda, whose unprotected state would bring upon her, whether deservedly or not, a sufficient portion of the world's ill-will to serve her purpose by injuring her character. And Carlovillé, in whose happy composition revenge had not been forgotten (too easily prevailed upon by Lady Mariamne's art,

31211

and

and his own consciousness of Ethelreda's preference for Conway, to believe the first, and doubt all the sincere promises and assurances of the latter), instead of returning to the Castle, remained in London, sparing neither time nor vigilance to discover Conway's retreat, in order to satisfy his revenge, and make himself some atonement for the disgraceful report, though, contrary to his expectations, it should prove unfounded.

In the mean time Conway's violent and alarming disorder continued; and the uncertain opinion of his recovery, entertained by his physician for many days, was a sufficient punishment to Mr. Conway for his unfeeling interference. He saw his son at the point of death, and with him the annihilation of all those ambitious projects, the attaining of which had long been the solace of his leisure, and the spur of his occupations. In losing his son, the unfortunate

nate

nate motive of all his toils, he lost there-
ward of a life of inquietude; since, in-
stead of investing him with those titles
and honours he saw within his grasp, he
beheld him in madness and almost in
death, through his own false and erro-
neous opinions.

Mrs. Conway, who her whole life had
been taught by her husband to look
upon every turn of his countenance as
an enigma which she was neither to
guess nor enquire into, saw his disguised
agitation in every feature: but studied
and evasive answers had long given her
the practice of seeing his uneasiness and
embarrassments with indifference; and
though she was at first offended at his
want of confidence, her own sense of
consequence, and the natural dignity of
her sentiments, uniformly restrained her
from troubling him with questions;
whilst her resentment of his conduct,
which

which was indeed an insult to a woman of discretion and abilities like Mrs. Conway, made her follow his example, so that they scarcely ever conversed but on common topics, when company obliged them to meet; for their hours of retirement were seldom passed together, except when Conway joined them, as his society was equally agreeable to both.

Mrs. Conway had always corresponded with her son; she was therefore much surprised at his silence, and, sometimes giving way to fears for his safety, was seriously distressed at it: but as Mr. Conway was the *last* person whom she would have thought of burthening with her anxiety, she endeavoured to console herself with patience. But patience itself may be exhausted; and even Mrs. Conway, though unused to complain, could not avoid mentioning her son's silence one morning, in a visit to her

new

new niece, Lady Caerleon, in hopes somebody would take the trouble to account for it.

Lady Mariamne L'Esterling was present, who with wonderful malice and address immediately undertook to prove to Mrs. Conway, that nothing could be more unreasonable than to expect a letter from her son, whilst his whole time and attention were taken up by Lady Carloville. "The novelty will wear off," continued she, "and then our *constant* cousin may perhaps find leisure to write to his relations."

One story was equally new to Mrs. Conway as the other: and Lady Mariamne, with many expressions of surprise at Mrs. Conway's ignorance, and of sorrow at being the first to tell it, related the whole; not forgetting to add, it was universally received for truth in the *world*, that the lady had demanded the protection of Captain Conway.

"And

"And that you know," said Lady Octavia, who sat by her sister, "a man of *common* gallantry could not have refused."

"I thought you, Lady Octavia, did not allow Conway to be a man of *common* gallantry."

"Of *common* civility, you mean," said she, colouring.

Mrs. Conway's sorrow at some parts of this story, did not prevent her from showing her anger and indignation at others which she guessed to be Lady Mariamne's embellishments. She would have vindicated Ethelreda with all the warmth of a parent, had she not felt too much contempt for her nieces, to think it necessary. Her sentiments indeed were partly expressed on her countenance, when she cautioned Lady Mariamne against making a point of telling this story, lest, when it was cleared up, the discredit of having raised such a fiction should

should *undeservedly* cast a blemish upon her character for veracity and good nature.

"How I hate Mrs. Conway!" exclaimed Octavia almost before she was out of the room. Lady Mariamne had too much prudence to say, "And so do I"—though she was obliged to bite her lip, in order to prevent herself from exclamations; for the sarcasm of Mrs. Conway's advice, which pointed directly at her principal foibles, was not lost upon her, though she would scarcely have been reformed at the remonstrances of an angel.

Whilst Conway's danger lasted, Mr. Conway made numberless resolutions never to interfere with him for the future, provided his reason was restored. But, like the temporising promise of people in affliction, Mr. Conway no sooner heard from Dr. Felton, that Conway was able to begin his journey to Frampton Lodge,

Lodge, than all the worldly advantages he had so long been accustomed to contemplate, returned to direct his wishes to their original object. He therefore left to the Doctor the whole charge of the patient, who had been prevailed on to accompany him, and employed himself in discouraging the report of his son and Lady Carlovile, which he concluded he might safely do after he was removed. This however had no other effect upon the minds of the generality than to revive the story, which having been near three weeks in circulation, was beginning to give way to some newer topic. Through Sir Francis L'Esterling, Mr. Conway's flat contradiction of the slander was conveyed to Lord Carlovile, who believed, or very readily appeared to believe, the whole a falsehood, upon Mr. Conway's authority. He accordingly made preparations for his departure for the Castle, in some
2 faint

faint hopes of finding Ethelreda concealed in one of the cottages in the village. But his stay in town was some time prolonged by the proceedings of Mr. Carlovile; who, though he did not dispute the identity of his brother's person, was not inclined to be quietly dispossessed of all the estates which he had so long considered as his own; and as wills are construed according to the *spirit*, the frequent spaces in that of the late Lord Carlovile sufficiently explained the intention of the testator, who evidently, when it was made, did not mean to exclude either son from a share in his possessions. Upon this supposition Mr. Carlovile founded his claim, which however his lordship was by no means disposed to allow; for it was one of his favourite maxims, that without compulsion no one need part with what they choose to keep! Having therefore put the matter upon the issue

SAHO of

of a law-suit, in answer to his brother's claim, and refusal to give up the estates in his possession but with a compromise, he was obliged to remain some time longer in London in order to advise with his counsel.

his counsel.

C H A P. XXXVI.

Portes, grilles, verroux, gardes, captivité,
Ténèbres, solitude, effroi, chagrin, souffrance ;
Puis que j'aie dans les fers un cœur en liberté,
En vain vous vous joignez pour vaincre ma constance.

DRELCOURT.

THIS temporary delay was not however of any material service to Ethelreda ; for though the arrival of Lord Carlovile was deferred much beyond her expectations, it was nevertheless certain at last ; of which truth the arrival of part of his household at the end of another month convinced her.

Ethelreda was musing through the dim painted windows of the hall, when the still silence of the evening was interrupted by the sound of voices and loud knockings at the gate of the Castle

court. She started, first more from surprise than fear; for the sound of talking was become so unusual within the Castle, that she was struck with the novelty almost without knowing what had alarmed her; for almost weeks had passed without her hearing any other sound than the echo of Llewellyn's footsteps. But Llewellyn, more aware of the intrusion, immediately warned his mistress to retire to the library, where he promised to attend her after he had disposed of the new comers.

Poor Ethelreda's fortitude was not so powerful a support as she fancied it would have been; for she could not think without shuddering, of the dismal habitation that awaited her reception; where she was to spend perhaps *all* the remainder of her life without society, and probably to be as much forgotten by those who had once called themselves her friends, as if she had never

ver existed. In this apprehension, however, Ethelreda neither included Conway nor her sister; since all her sufferings were doubled when she thought of them, and of her own, to them, mysterious disappearance.

In the midst of her distresses her best consolation was, that, deprived as she should be of wholesome air, of exercise, and almost of light, added to the hopeless solitude of her dungeon, her life could not be a long one, particularly as her health, in spite of the strength of her constitution and her youth, was already declining.

Whilst Ethelreda sat with her face on her hand, reflecting on the melancholy events of her short life, which seemed as it were in its last stage, the evening grew dark, and two hours after night-fall Winifred and Llewellyn came to conduct her to her prison. Ethelreda rubbed her eyes at sight of the lantern

which Llewellyn had provided for their subterraneous journey; and trying to smile, in order to raise the spirits of her weeping companions, she reached out her hand to take leave of them and to decline their attendance, unable to speak, and fearful of trusting her voice lest she should add to their distress.

Neither Llewellyn nor Winifred could utter a word in reply to this silent dismissal, which neither, accustomed as they were to implicit obedience, was disposed to take. They preceded their mistress in undisguised sorrow: and Ethelreda, too much overcome by her own misfortunes to exert her authority, suffered them to accompany her, though their grief considerably added to hers.

They had performed more than half their journey, when Llewellyn, whose fears were not quite so strong as on a former occasion, having looked on each side as he went, stopped suddenly, startled

startled and alarmed at seeing on the right hand an arched entrance to another passage. Ethelreda was about to ask why he hesitated to proceed, when she perceived, by holding up the light, they had still much to examine and discover before she could think herself secure in her new retreat. She saw reluctance and fear in the countenances of her companions: fatigued and desponding as she was, she would willingly have dismissed the two servants, though she was determined to go on, and fixed in her resolution not to quit the Castle whilst there was an appearance of security within its walls. Her spirits were, however, too weak to dispute with them, though she was desirous of sparing them so much toil. After a trifling altercation, in which Llewellyn and Winifred still persisted in following her, Ethelreda boldly went forward to explore these unknown and desolate vaults. Notwith-

standing her courage, the idea that she was taking possession of her grave had fixed itself upon her mind from the moment of her entrance. As she proceeded through this still unknown vault, which she could perceive gradually descended, the terrifying fancy fixed itself more firmly on her imagination, her blood was chilled, and she had nearly shrieked with horror at the expectation of finding herself in some frightful charnel filled with skulls and heaps of mouldering bones.

So many shocking images had nearly taken from Ethelreda the power of proceeding, when her progress was interrupted by steps. She was at once in some degree relieved from her terror, as she concluded from that circumstance it could be nothing more than a nearer way to the tower than that they had hitherto used: she did not therefore hesitate to ascend; but having gained the
top

top of the steps, both Ethelreda and Llewellyn were surprised at finding they could proceed no further than a small low arch at their termination, which prevented them from standing upright. Llewellyn examined it on every side by the light of his lantern; and unable to discover how the arch was closed, since it did not appear to be either a wall or door that impeded their progress, he touched it with his hands, and immediately perceived that a kind of curtain or drapery of some cumbrous texture surrounded them. He found no difficulty in lifting it up, and immediately discovered, by the assistance of a pale gleam of moon-light which shot through a window at the west end, that they were in the church of St. Siffrid, within the rail of the communion table, and that the aperture by which they entered was concealed by the velvet hangings that

adorned the altar and covered the communion table.

Upon casting her eyes round, Ethelreda presently perceived where she was : at the same instant a thousand terrible recollections rushed into her mind ; she could not but remember the last time she had approached that altar under such inauspicious omens ; all her melancholy fore-bodings were more than verified ; and though her anticipating fears had never suggested any misfortune equal to the return of Carlovile, yet at that very moment she thought he was in the Castle.

Winifred and Llewellyn, already almost petrified with the scene they had gone through, kept their eyes fixed upon their mistress. Ethelreda attempted to speak to them ; they perceived her lips move, but heard no sound ; her pale countenance changed to the most deathly

deathly white; her eyes lost their lustre—then closed, and she dropped on the pavement.

Winifred shrieked so loud at seeing her fall, that the whole church echoed. She fell upon her knees, and, taking one of her hands, as instantly quitted it, chilled with fear at its coldness. In vain she attempted to raise her: the weight of death seemed to have fixed her to the ground. Both servants gave way to loud and clamorous lamentations, without fear of disturbing their mistress's last moments, for they concluded she was already dead. It was therefore without the smallest assistance from Winifred that she recovered from her fainting, who scarcely knew how to trust her senses when she saw Ethelreda once more open her eyes. The fainting seemed to have deprived her of all her remaining strength; it was with extreme difficulty the two terrified and feeble servants

could support her down the steps into the vault; slowly, and with many pauses, they at length reached the tower. Here the exhausted Ethelreda was in danger of relapsing, till at Winifred's entreaty she was prevailed on to swallow a little water. By degrees she grew more composed, and at last so far recovered her calmness, as to commend the judicious manner in which Llewellyn had furnished her prison, and to enquire about the new inhabitants of the Castle.

Llewellyn hitherto had forbore to tell Ethelreda that only the servants were arrived: he was too much hurt at his mistress's fallen dignity, to think with patience of her being obliged to give way to them, and he thought to spare her some mortification in letting her suppose it was Lord Carloville himself.

"Llewellyn!" said she, hesitating, as if she were afraid to hear—"Does your lord sleep in my father's apartment?"

The

The bare idea was too much for Llewellyn; the old man repeated in a broken voice, "*My lord?*—Oh, madam! call me *your* servant; the bounty of good Sir Roger will prevent me from wanting the wages of a new master." At that moment Llewellyn made an inward resolution never to receive any thing from the new lord of the Castle, with all the ancient spirit and obstinacy of his nation.

Ethelreda was affected at the old man's warmth; she tried to console him by expressions of gratitude for having consented to pass his life in a service so repugnant to him, for her sake; and Llewellyn, thinking himself overpaid by the thanks of his mistress, was at length prevailed upon, together with Winifred, to retire to the Castle, and leave Ethelreda to her new and extraordinary solitude.

It was not from a desire of sleeping
C 6 herself

herself that Ethelreda was in haste to dismiss her attendants, though she was anxious they should rest after their fatiguing service ; the novelty joined to the dreariness of her situation took away her weariness. The whole choice of the furniture had been left to Llewellyn ; Ethelreda had never once interfered in the arrangement : and though Llewellyn had requested to know what books she chose, these too were left to his judgment. He had therefore removed part of the most ancient of the Castle furniture, at least, that from its size was moveable, because he knew Sir Roger always preferred it. By the side of the antique canopied bed, stood a not less venerable table ; over which hung a brass lamp with all its appurtenances, not *very* ancient certainly, but one of those that had been in common use in the Castle in the last century. Not far from the table was placed an oak chair carved

carved in various emblems, and allusions to sacred story. The grated window, already nearly choaked with ivy, Llewellyn had further secured from admitting the rain by a casement of painted glass, which he preferred because the L'Esterling arms were still visible and unimpaired upon it.

After having bestowed particular attention on every article of her new household, Ethelreda thought of her library. She presently perceived it was a copious, though not a voluminous one. On casting her eyes towards the table, she saw one large book, which from its outside she presently knew to be her father's bible, the same that had raised Llewellyn's scruples in the library. Ethelreda opened the cover, and in the blank leaf at the beginning she saw registered all the births and marriages of her family. Her own name was there: it reminded her she was now in her
twentieth

twentieth year; which she looked upon as the last of her existence, since the dreary remainder would be breathed away in solitude and repining. But when she read the date of her unfortunate marriage, the last writing in her father's hand, all her melancholy but almost calm reflections gave way to grief and passion. She hastily shut the book, and, bursting into tears, dropped upon her knees, exhausting her already weakened spirits in complaining of her destiny, and in prayers for her release; till, worn out by fatigue and exertion, her head dropped upon her hands, and towards morning she fell asleep.

It was late before Ethelreda awoke; for no ray of sunshine penetrated through the gloomy window to disturb her slumbers. Too much occupied by deeper sorrows, she no longer lamented having seen for the last time the bright light of day, or that she had for ever
taken

taken leave of the cool and healthful breezes of the morning: she even comforted herself with the idea that each of these circumstances would contribute to shorten the length of her confinement; and before Winifred and Llewellyn came to pay their evening attendance, she had settled the manner of her funeral.

The visible depression of the two servants did not however escape her notice. It was not without much enquiry they were prevailed on to tell the cause: at last they confessed Lord Carloville arrived only that morning; that his threats and anger, at finding from Llewellyn that Ethelreda was yet undiscovered, had terrified both him and Winifred; but they were still more alarmed at his intention of dismissing them, than at his menaces and execrations, adding, that he had declared he would spare no means to secure her person.

Ethelreda shuddered at this intelligence,

gence, and at the same time felt happy at having so effectually escaped her tyrant. She considered that, should Carloville put his threats in execution with regard to the servants, it would always be in her power to retire undiscovered from the watch-tower; and though she dreaded being driven to such an extremity, the consoling reflection that she was not as unfortunate as she might have been, contributed to calm her mind, and to make her look round her prison with a sort of pleasure. With many expressions of anxiety for the trouble in which she had involved Winifred and Llewellyn, Ethelreda particularly recommended them to be circumspect in their attendance, as they in all probability would be watched with a jealous eye by their lord; and in order to avoid suspicion, she requested they would bring her supplies in larger quantities, and make fewer visits.

Having

Having given directions so necessary for her future safety, which as she imagined would secure it, Ethelreda, after the departure of her visitors, approached her bible without any of those emotions that had so much disturbed her the preceding night. Llewellyn would have added her harp and music; but these Ethelreda had forbidden, and had desired to have instead an *Æolian* harp which belonged to her father. This she placed at the door of her dungeon, where the wind, rushing through the long narrow passages, produced upon its strings a wild and pensive melody; and it was not till the crowing of the first cock, that, unfatigued with her studies and charmed by the music, she would think of repose.

Thus without the smallest variation, setting aside the occasional visits of the two servants, passed the days and nights of Ethelreda. To her equal satisfaction
and

and astonishment, neither of them had heard further of their intended dismissal. Of any of the occurrences in the Castle or its neighbourhood she never enquired; studiously avoiding all conversation that might lead to names which she flattered herself might in time become indifferent to her, since her duty and her repose equally required it.

C H A P. XXXVII.

"*Soul, body, fortune!* Ev'ry good pertains
To one of these. But prize not all alike:
The goods of fortune to thy body's health,
Body to soul, and soul submit to God."

YOUNG.

ARRIVED at Frampton lodge, Conway slowly recovered from his bodily indisposition; but his mind, too deeply wounded by his aggravated misfortunes and disappointments, appeared to have lost its vigour; and though his reason was not impaired by his late malady, his temper, before violent and irritable, seemed now to have changed to a settled despondency. He was become passive and gentle, never objecting to any measures of Dr. Felton's proposing; but so averse to conversation, that, whenever
the

the Doctor began to speak; or to entreat an answer to any thing he had been saying, he would put a book into his hand, or instantly leave the room. In compliance with the hint, the Doctor would sometimes read to him; and Conway, who was then neither obliged to listen nor to answer, would endure to stay; or sometimes, if urged to speak, instead of answering a question, he would fall into an agony of grief, unguardedly mentioning his marriage, now the subject that engrossed all his ideas.

Conway's education had been entirely his father's care: of learning he possessed both the solid and the brilliant; and in all elegant accomplishments his attainments were as conspicuous as the very small value he set upon them, and the total indifference with which he passed by opportunities of shining which others so anxiously seek. His father, who intended him for a man of the world,

world, meant that he should attract and prepossess; he had therefore confined his cares to the cultivation of those qualities that dazzle and allure in the eyes of the Great, whilst serious and more important knowledge was left to chance. Mrs. Conway saw and lamented the error. She had but few opportunities of seeing her son, but these she constantly employed in endeavours to supply the deficiency by her instructions and example: but, notwithstanding all her cares, Conway's education, though infinitely more attended to than any of his contemporaries, shewed its operations more in his manners than in his sentiments. Having imperceptibly been taught to expect a very large portion of this world's happiness, he was foolishly content with his share, and suffered his mind to be distracted from every other contemplation; and now that every fair prospect was faded away, when it was
dreadful

dreadful to look forward, and agonizing to look back, he considered himself as without hope, and the sound of consolation carried with it a reproach, which his disturbed and wounded mind could not endure.

Doctor Felton, who had suffered from misfortunes, and whose piety alone had preserved him from despair and death itself, was sensibly afflicted at Conway's distress, and at his indifference to all the consoling reasons religion can offer. It was in vain the Doctor passed whole hours in pious lectures, or in reading books of divinity; they were no alleviation to Conway's sufferings, who either displayed despondence and inattention, or sullenness and impatience. Thus, without hopes of effecting any cure on the mind of his patient, and disturbed with fears lest this despondence should fix upon the brain, and break out in some desperate outrage,

rage, the Doctor anxiously longed to see or hear from Mr. Conway (who had given him no address), to warn him of the supposed state of Conway's mind, and to assure him that, as far as he was able, he had discharged his duty as a physician.

Scarcely with less anxiety did Mr. Conway himself pass away the time till he could venture to pay a visit to Frampton. Several letters from Mr. Harwood to his son he had received and opened: these were all filled with enquiries as to the success of his search, with entreaties to write to him or come to Lisbon, where he was with his family, and with many expressions of wonder at his silence. By the assistance of these letters he was enabled to impose on Mrs. Conway, whose anxiety to hear from her son had surmounted all her resolutions of silence; and she was only diverted from writing to him by being told

told he and Harwood were amusing themselves by travelling from place to place in Spain and Portugal, and that in all probability he was now on his return to England. But these impossibilities must be discovered some time or other, Mr. Conway very well knew; he was therefore in haste to find an opportunity of making a journey to Frampton, particularly as the Trecaſtle family was preparing to remove to Strathener Caſtle.

It was therefore abſolutely neceſſary, if Conway's malady continued, that he ſhould be removed from Frampton-lodge, becauſe Lord Caerleon and his father uſually paſſed ſome weeks there in the ſhooting-ſeaſon. If, on the contrary, he were ſufficiently recovered to mingle with his uncle's family at Strathener, where Mr. and Mrs. Conway as uſual were invited to ſpend the ſummer, Mr Conway hoped, from a variety
of

of circumstances, to come to some fair compromise and agreement with his son, which would be the means of their reconciliation.

He therefore eagerly accepted Lord Trecastle's invitation to Mrs. Conway to accompany her niece into Wales, without having allowed her any choice on the occasion, who would much rather have remained in London in hopes of an earlier meeting with her son, though she was much disturbed at his supposed neglectful silence. But it suited his purpose better for many reasons, that Mrs. Conway should accompany Lady Octavia, whom he began to suspect of a resolution to take a decided part in the Count de Clerac's favour: and as such a determination carried into execution would have totally deranged his plans, he imagined Lady Octavia would be less at liberty to pursue her own schemes whilst her aunt was with

Vol. III. D her,

her, than quite alone ; as Lady Caerleon and her Lord both remained some time longer in town. With all the laborious and indefatigable pains of a schemer, having effected thus much of his purpose, on the same day that Lord Trecaſtle ſet out for Strathener Mr. Conway began his journey to Frampton-lodge.

Mr. Conway was not more grieved than ſurprized at his ſon's altered appearance. His perſon thin and emaciated, his countenance wild and haggard, and his dreſs neglected, beſpoke at once the ravages of ſickneſs on his body and mind. His almoſt extorted replies to Mr. Conway's queſtions and enquiries only ſerved to increaſe the remorse he felt at having proceeded with ſuch unpardonable harſhneſs ; yet even this was inſufficient to make him lay aſide the pernicious purpoſe that had already been of ſuch miſchievous conſequences to Conway. He was even in haſte to
and • C III . . make

make new proposals, and, seizing the first opportunity in Dr. Felton's absence, he began by saying he was not ignorant of the cause of his son's illness, and by lamenting that now he had the inclination he had not the power to consent to his wishes.

Conway's countenance changed like that of a wretch under the torture; but, according to his of late accustomed manner, he returned no answer; and Mr. Conway continued, "Had I known, Harry, *why* you refused to accede to a former proposal I have often repeated, I might perhaps, when there was apparently no obstacle, have complied with your inclinations, and by complying have involved you in still greater distress. I cannot help thinking therefore that your silence and reserve towards me, though I have not merited it, has been of material service to you; since Lord Carloville would doubtless have exerted a prior right, which you would

have been most unwilling to allow, without the slightest power to dispute it."

—"Do you not see," said Mr. Conway, after having waited, in vain, for an answer—"do you not perceive how much perplexity you have escaped?"

"I perceive nothing but the despair and misery into which I am fallen!" said Conway, in a desponding tone, after a long pause.

"I never suspected you before of cowardice or want of fortitude," rejoined Mr. Conway, in rather a recriminating accent; "but thus wilfully sinking under an evil which from the first you knew to be without a remedy, is weak and effeminate."

"I have no respect for any of those qualities the world calls virtues," said Conway, gloomily.—"I am convinced the most despicable are the happiest!"—His thoughts at that moment were deeply fixed upon Ethelreda and Carloville.

"I know

"I know not why you should not be happy," said Mr. Conway. "I will leave nothing on my part untried to make you so, and in return I only ask your compliance to what it can no longer be of any consequence to you to refuse."

"It can be of no kind of consequence to me!" said Conway with a weary air, rousing himself from his reverie, having just caught the last words.

"Do you consent?" cried his father, eagerly.

"Consent?" repeated Conway.

"I do not mean to urge you at present, Henry," said his father, in a softened tone; "but I would have you accompany me to Strathener, where I do not doubt you will soon recover your spirits and your health; and perhaps before the family returns to town, Lady Octavia may be prevailed on to give you her hand."

"I have already received a hand," cried Conway, "and with it anguish and despair! But it is a gift I would not relinquish or exchange for all the honours and blessings the whole world can offer!"—There was so much wildness and enthusiasm in Conway's tone, and so much animation in his countenance, which suddenly changed from the deepest gloom to something like pleasure, that, with the vivacity of his manner, in some degree justified the thought that immediately returned to Mr. Conway's recollection, that his son's intellects were still subject to the wanderings of fever. In a voice of deep dejection, he asked what he meant.

"I mean that I am married!" cried Conway, exultingly. "But I have no wife," continued he, lowering his tone and falling into an agony of grief. Then striking his head with violence, he suddenly rushed out of the room, leaving

Mr.

Mr. Conway stupefied and annihilated with grief, fear, and amazement.

Mr. Conway, now thoroughly convinced that his son's mind was disordered, both from his extravagant actions and the marriage he talked of, which the former never suspected to have taken place, but rather imagined his ravings were occasioned by intensely dwelling on the same subject, was utterly at a loss to proceed. He began to blame himself for having roused him into distraction by speaking of his marriage with Octavia; and this supposed proof of a violently distempered mind added considerably to his distress, because it helped to convince him of the inveteracy of the disorder, which he began to fear would end in confirmed derangement. In all these torturing apprehensions and melancholy fears he was confirmed by Dr. Felton. Not indeed from the Doctor's own opinion, but by the half sen-

rences and exclamations he repeated, which Conway from time to time in the anguish of his heart had uttered. These the Doctor did not relate as arguments of his insanity, unacquainted as he was with Conway's history; he only repeated them as incitements to the compassion and compliance of his friends, whom he suspected of exercising an unwarrantable degree of power. But to Mr. Conway every monosyllable was a convincing proof that Conway's passions had triumphed over his reason. In the event Mr. Conway endeavoured to justify himself, and be reconciled to his own harshness: he would most willingly have taken a load of bitterness from his own heart by persuading himself, that, without his interference, to his son the consequences would have been the same; but he was already too deeply penetrated by the consciousness of having been highly instrumental in the present melancholy

choly catastrophe, to be blinded by the fallacy of his own arguments; and he returned to Strathener, partly to avoid the sight of his son; uneasy, restless, fearful lest his journey, though by no means uncommon, should excite suspicions and curiosity. Tormented with the horror of having brought the deepest calamity upon himself, and without having come to any resolution for his son's removal, he was in continual fear of some discovery detrimental to his character as a parent and a man; and to aggravate his misfortunes, those schemes of unjustifiable ambition and insatiable avarice, that had incited him to proceed such unwarrantable lengths, were equally sufferers, since they were so closely connected with Conway.

Indeed, at Strathener every thing seemed to have taken a new turn. Lord Trecastle, piqued at the refusal of Lord and Lady Caerleon to accompany him

into Wales, had not yet recovered his good humour. Mrs. Conway, taken up with her son's silence, and entirely absorbed in her anxiety to see him, and the numerous conjectures that presented themselves to her mind upon the subject of Ethelreda's strange absence, together with the malicious aspersions of Lady Mariamne, could neither amuse by her conversation, nor receive pleasure from that of others. Lady Octavia, as usual, vain and petulant, was more than usually ill-tempered; and Mr. Conway so much changed in his manners as to excite the animadversions of the whole family. To complete the novelty of the scene, there was not as yet, owing to the unusually bad weather, one single visitor at Strathener, to help to dispel the gloom of this at present unsociable family; a circumstance that now occurred for the first time in the residence of the present Earl of Treastle.

Sir

Sir Francis L'Esterling and Lady Mariamne had been some time arrived at Kilgaren-hall. They returned to their seat about the same time Lord Carloville took possession of St. Siffrid's Castle. Lady Mariamne, by means of a written card, proposed the terms of reconciliation; which were, that they should immediately return to their house in the country, which, out of complaisance to Sir Francis, she condescended to call by its new name *Casino Belvedere*.

The Baronet, more than satisfied by such a mark of condescension, returned his compliments, that he would be ready to attend her Ladyship; and accordingly they commenced their journey on the first day fixed on by Lady Mariamne.

As for Lord Carloville, having found from his lawyers that his suit was likely to have an unfavourable issue, he began to incline towards a compromise; and therefore gave the necessary instructions

to his counsel, before he left town, at Lady Mariamne's pressing instigations, in order to try if were yet possible to find Ethelreda, partly for his own satisfaction, and partly to deceive Lady Mariamne, whom he hoped, by judiciously flattering her inclinations, he should in time bring over to the entire approbation of a plan as extraordinary as it was infamous.

In consequence of the scheme he had in agitation, Lord Carlovile neglected no opportunity, before the departure from town of the L'Esterling family, of cultivating an intimacy with Sir Francis; who, though he disliked the man, was not proof against his insinuating manners, and possessed much too large a share of vanity to receive his flattery with the coolness his frequent intrusions deserved. Under pretence therefore of making enquiries of Sir Francis respecting the Harwoods, the necessary repairs
of

of the Castle, pretended negotiations for taking a lease, and numberless proposals and objections with regard to the rent, which had not yet been settled; Lord Carloville contrived to establish himself on so firm a footing at Casino Belvedere, that few weeks passed in which he was not at least three or four days of the seven the guest of Sir Francis, or rather of his lady.

Indeed Lord Carloville, animated with the true spirit of friendship, whilst Sir Francis was spending his mornings in culling lines from the Italian poets, in order to *compile* a sonnet, or projecting some brilliant entertainment, or wasting whole reams of paper in plans of architecture in orders of his own inventing—Lord Carloville, with Lady Mariamne leaning on his arm, and accompanied by Sir Francis's bailiff, usually walked over the grounds that surrounded the house which Sir Francis had lately purchased,

chased, computing its value and that of the St. Siffred's estates; sometimes suggesting improvements in agriculture, and lamenting the wild extravagance of his *friend*; and sometimes earnestly recommending Lady Mariamne to use all her influence in retrenching the innumerable and expensive entertainments in which Sir Francis was so fond of wasting his income.

To thwart and contradict Sir Francis was one of Lady Mariamne's darling pleasures, as it was become her chief satisfaction to please Lord Carlovile, who saw with delight the influence he possessed, and the altercations, disputes and quarrels, his *well-meant* advice never failed to create between this jarring and ill-afforted pair. But on their dissensions he built his own success; neither was it any detriment to his plans, but the contrary, that the servants of the family began to whisper strange surmises
on

on his Lordship's extreme deference and attention to Lady Mariamne.

At St. Siffrid's, if Lord Carlovile continued the *praise* of œconomy, the practice of it was thrown aside. Not that there was any thing magnificent in his establishment, nor was his table as expensive in a week, as that of the late Sir Roger L'Esterling in one day, from the remains of whose princely but old-fashioned feast half the poor in the county was maintained. But in return, his stud contained some of the finest racers in the kingdom, who had won numberless plates, and, what is more to the purpose, enormous bets. Upon these winnings Lord Carlovile entertained a set of dissolute young men—whether of his own rank or not, he was not over-scrupulous. All the morning, nothing was to be heard but the sound of dice, and the half joking half serious execrations

execrations of the losing gamesters; in the evening, the boisterous and vociferous mirth or petulant and quarrellsome alterations of intoxication.

As all ceremony was abolished amongst this jovial and happy circle, the guests at St. Siffrid's were never suffered to interfere with Lord Carloville's frequent engagements at Casino Belvedere; and to the noisy party, whilst its amusements were uninterrupted, the absence of one or more of its associates was no cause of regret. The Count de Clerac-Auxerre, who before his pretended death owed considerable sums to Carloville, and who, unable to make them good, had contracted fresh debts instead of diminishing the old ones, with equal folly and levity for some time past had made one of this licentious and unprincipled set; though, in consequence of a very plain intimation from Lord Treastle,

Trecastle, he did not visit at Strathener, neither had he made his appearance at Sir Francis L'Esterling's.

This decision of Lord Trecastle's having been made in deference to Mr. Conway's advice and frequent warnings, he was tolerably well aware of the cause of Lady Octavia's ill humour; and judging from her well-known rebellious spirit, which, having always been treated with unbounded indulgence, knew not how to submit, he thought it expedient to bestow some attention to her movements; as he knew her capable of acting perversely against her judgment, because she would not be controuled.

C H A P. XXXVIII.

—chi ricorre all' arte,

Benche ancor non tradisca, e sul cammino

L'artificio alla frode è assai vicino.

METASTASIO.

IT was not without some reason that Mr. Conway suspected his niece. De Clerac's residence at Lord Carlovill's was not an accidental, but a concerted thing. Lady Octavia, in consequence of her father's positive commands that she should think no more of him, had come to a decided determination in the Count's favour; and as Mrs. Conway's company was a restraint upon her actions the exigency of the case would not brook, Lady Octavia, though delicate to *excess*, was under the necessity of rising

rising at four o'clock in the morning in order to keep appointments and make new assignations. Besides, there was something so charmingly romantic in going out at day-break with a milking-pail, a flat-crowned beaver hat and a scarlet mantle, to meet a lover ! free from the tyrannical persecutions of an unfeeling father, a prying uncle, and a scrutinizing aunt ! So disinterested too ! With a fortune of forty thousand pounds, she had resolved to forfeit ten by marrying against her father's consent. What a wonderful sacrifice ! and, provided the pleasure of contradiction is not taken into the account, a perfect pattern for all future heroines.

As for the Count, he was the most tender and elegant shepherd that ever kept a flock or drove a herd ! Indeed, his appearance was almost as *natural* as a *berger* in the ballet of an opera ! And so much did his disguise relieve his figure
in

in Lady Octavia's eyes, that she was in continual fear lest his noble mien should lead to a discovery. But all this was exactly as it should be: for the Count very well knew, had he looked like a clown, even in the dress of one, her ladyship would presently have changed the destination of her wealth.

Mr. Conway, who held it as a maxim, that all men of study and contemplation, particularly statesmen, must be early risers, was never later than five o'clock when an unagitated mind would allow him to sleep so long: but since his late visit to Frampton, he had often begun his morning perambulations through the long galleries at day-break; in so much that the domestics of the family had set it down for a certainty, that their lord's brother had a troubled conscience. He had been measuring his silent steps for more than half an hour up and down a gallery, at the end of which the first rays

rays of the morning cast a yellow light upon Lady Octavia's door. Mr. Conway stood at the farther end of the gallery, and forgot his contemplations to admire it. Presently the door opened gently, when he saw, by the light which shone upon her figure, a milk-maid completely equipped with a pail, and with so much the appearance of a country girl, that, had he seen her in any other part of the house, she would have passed unnoticed; but coming out of Lady Octavia's room carried suspicion with it. Mr. Conway concluded she was at least a messenger; and pursuing her hastily down the stair-case into the hall, he overtook her just as she was unlocking a small door leading into the gardens. Mr. Conway called to her aloud to go no further!

"No Saxon!"—cried she in Welch, endeavouring to disguise her voice under

der a tolerable degree of accent, and still trying to make her escape. In her hurry, however, she had forgotten which way to turn the key. He advanced to her, somewhat roughly seized her arm, and, looking steadily in her face, immediately recognised Lady Octavia! But of the two he was infinitely the most confounded. He continued to look at her some minutes in silence.

“Well, fir!”—cried she with an assured manner and pert tone, “now you know who I am, I hope you are satisfied?—I know I think you have taken a great liberty.”

“No, madam, I am not,” said Mr. Conway, recovering himself; “nor shall I be satisfied till I hear what can have tempted you to this extraordinary disguise. There can be no excuse for it.”

“Really I don’t mean to make any: but if I must tell”—said Octavia, affecting

ing to laugh, "I was going to milk goats!"

"And so Lady Octavia Conway—'even in these honest mean habiliments'—steals out of her father's house at four o'clock in the morning to milk goats!" said Mr. Conway, affecting to laugh too in a most provoking manner.

"I am determined to go, notwithstanding your ridicule," said Octavia, trying to make her escape from her uncle.

"But I cannot answer letting you go alone, my dear"—said he, still holding her hand. "Besides, I wish extremely to see how you perform in your new character."

"I will not be so insulted," cried Octavia, bursting into tears of rage: "You think, sir, to tyrannize and domineer over the whole family: but I will do as I please in my father's house; I will complain to him this very morning."

“And what will your ladyship complain of?” said Mr. Conway, calmly. “Tell, and perhaps I may let you go.”

“That you have taken upon you more authority than I choose to submit to, by attempting to control me in an innocent project——”

“Which I discover to be the disguise of a project not altogether so innocent, Lady Octavia!”—continued he seriously, and fixing his eyes steadily upon her: “I suspect that you are—or rather were, on the point of quitting your father’s house in disobedience to his strict commands, with the certain forfeiture of part of your fortune. I am not apt to draw false conclusions; and now, I will frankly own, your testimony can neither change nor strengthen my opinion.”

Lady Octavia again burst into tears of anger and disappointment, and was making towards the stairs without answering, when Mr. Conway took her by

by the hand, and led her back to a chair.

"I am too much your friend, Lady Octavia," said he in a solemn and assuming tone, "to let slip this occasion of representing to you the danger and rashness of the step you are about to take, and from which, if it be possible, I will dissuade you. It would be more compatible with the duties of that relationship in which I stand towards your father and yourself, if I were to say I would prevent you—it is what I owe to myself—to you—and to your family."

"I should be glad to know," said Octavia, half choked with her own passion and her uncle's pomp—"I should be glad to know how my actions can interfere with your credit!—You may depend upon it, we shall *never* be more nearly connected than we are at present.—And I doubt not," added she spitefully, "but your son has already made Lady

Carloville the same assurances—in spite of your machinations to the contrary.”

Though these last words were spoken without any extraordinary emphasis, Mr. Conway trembled at their implication, and thought he already saw, in the insulting yet mortified countenance of Octavia, the developing of all his past measures as well as those yet unaccomplished. In a moment descending from his high tone of authority, and lowering his voice to the most moderate and conciliating one—“ I am sorry, my dear Octavia, that Conway’s conduct should have had so desperate an effect on yours; I am deeply grieved that a temporary infatuation he will always have reason to regret, should have irritated you to throw yourself away on a downright adventurer; for such I cannot help considering the Count, a man who can now no longer choose between his title and his patrimony.”

“ And

"And suppose I had but one choice to make, I would spurn at Henry Conway, whilst the Count de Clerac even without his patrimony is the alternative so infinitely superior."

"In that case," said Mr. Conway, scarcely able to command either his muscles or his voice, "I shall fully acquaint Lord Trecastle with what has passed this morning."

"I defy you!"—cried Octavia, in an undaunted tone.

Lady Octavia's "I defy you," though without any other meaning than provoking insolence, was sufficient to bring Mr. Conway to moderation in his terms. "You defy me?" repeated he, cautiously. "Do you not know how much you are in my power, Lady Octavia?"

"In your power, sir?—I suppose I could revenge myself if I were exasperated—I shall not condescend to ask for

your silence; for at any rate I believe my power is equal to my will—at least I would wish you to understand, Mr. Conway, that I am not to be menaced.”

“Who is menacing you, Lady Octavia?—What is it you fear?—I am vexed to see you so alarmed at a trifling occurrence like the one of this morning; an occurrence, if you will hear reason, so easily compromised: but really your ladyship is so extremely suspicious—tenacious—so very hasty, I mean, that it is impossible to discuss coolly with you a common subject.”

“Oh pray, sir, do not let my warmth throw you off your guard for the future. I will confess, I never saw my uncle in a passion before: but, upon my honour, you looked just now so *frightful* with rage! exactly like my father!”

“For Heaven’s sake, Lady Octavia, give me leave to speak without interruption, if it be but for five minutes!”

“Well,

“ Well, sir ?”

“ I intend to propose the most advantageous terms to you, Lady Octavia, in so much that I am certain you cannot object to them. Provided you will think no more of the Count de Clerac, I will answer for Conway’s fulfilling his first engagements, and joyfully returning to his allegiance: in that case a general amnesty shall be passed, and I will pledge myself not to mention a syllable of this morning’s disagreement.”

“ Your terms are really irresistible !” cried Octavia, ironically : “ but Mr. Harry Conway’s allegiance requires so very powerful a guarantee——”

“ Oh, leave that to me !”——cried Mr. Conway, whose eagerness made him overlook the manner of Octavia’s consent : “ all I ask, and that I cannot possibly dispense with, is your solemn promise to accept Henry Conway in mar-

riage—to swear to me that you will meet him at the altar.”

“All you ask!—You are really very moderate!” rejoined Octavia, in the same tone.

“I am *serious*, Lady Octavia.”

“I must consider of it,” said she, after having pondered some time.

“I must have an immediate answer,” said Mr. Conway, “because my resolutions are already taken. For your sake, I am willing to moderate the rigour of my first intentions, by uniting your interests with those of my son.”

“You have no right to tyrannize over my happiness, or direct my choice,” cried Octavia, shedding a few spiteful tears. “But, thank Heaven! if I do consent, it will always be in my power to revenge my own untoward fate on the wretched tool of your despotism: it is not impossible, unfeeling

as

as you are, but you may one day repent, in your son's fate, having made me miserable to gratify your avarice—for I have long seen your motives, sir."

"I did not imagine you had been so blind to your own perfections, madam!—But all this is very fine: you are not displeased in your heart, I know, on the knowledge of which I place a strong dependence, notwithstanding your present ill humour. But to come to the point: do you," presenting his pocket-book, on the leaves of which he had been writing—"do you choose to write your name to this solemn promise?—or must I represent to your father, that it is necessary you should be locked up to prevent your disgracing your family?"

Octavia, irritated beyond all bearing at the style of her uncle's harangue, rudely snatched the tablets from his hand, and hastily scrawled her name to ratify

the agreement; then, contemptuously throwing them upon the floor, she fled up stairs, partly to hide her laughter, which contended with her rage, but more anxious to devise means by which she could inform the Count of this new and unexpected reverse of fortune, which, however, appeared to her in no very serious light, as she scoffed at the bare idea of being bound by an extorted promise.

"If she had known any thing to my prejudice," said Mr. Conway to himself, as he took up the tablets, "she would not have consented so easily: but conscience, conscience doth make cowards of us all!"

All that Mr. Conway had just effected, had been the thought of the moment, arising from the manifest advantages his accidental discovery of Lady Octavia's intentions had given him: but

when

when he came to recollect and reflect on the promises he had so amply made for Conway—promises which he knew him, at that moment, the most obstinately averse from fulfilling—he almost repented of what he had, in the heat of his contention, considered as the most certain assurance of success. He wanted no new proof to be convinced of Conway's firmness, or of his attachment to Ethelreda; he had already found her previous marriage an argument of no force or consequence. He knew of no other to urge: and now having, as he imagined, revived Lady Octavia's partiality, and bound himself for a return to it; upon a calm revival, he perceived and acknowledged, that the step he had taken was the most probable one to precipitate the discovery of every circumstance he so much wished to conceal. It was not till his perplexity had risen to a tormenting height, that Mr. Conway

recollected the most insuperable of all bars to his measures, Conway's repeated declarations that he was already married.

But, perplexed as he was, Mr. Conway could not resolve to relinquish his designs. Instead therefore of relaxing in the strictness of his observations on Lady Octavia, he kept so severe a scrutiny over her actions, that notwithstanding her numerous contrivances she could fall on no plan to elude the vigilance of her uncle, who effectually prevented her coming to any explanation with the Count de Clerac on the subject of their late agreement; hoping, by the apparent indifference of Octavia, to detach the Count entirely from the pursuit, without any further discussion between them.

C H A P. XXXIX.

Proper deformity seems not in the fiend
So horrid, as in women.

LEAR.

SIR Francis L'Esterling, whose dove-like lady daily exercised some new stretch of power over him or his household, either in curtailing the number of his guests, diminishing or increasing that of his servants, in countermanding his orders, deranging his entertainments, or ridiculing his projects, just as the spring that governed all her actions, either from caprice or design, directed, had long been projecting his own emancipation from a yoke so insupportable. Not that Sir Francis meant to rid himself of

his tormentor by a formal separation, but, by a well-timed and vigorous exertion of power, to curb in some degree the tyrannical and overbearing spirit of Lady Mariamne.

It was partly to gratify his own frivolous taste for trifles and ostentatious show, or to make a parade with what he called his *taste*, and partly to hint to his lady he *would* have a will of his own, that Sir Francis had, after many struggles and contentions with his imperious wife, prevailed so far as to be allowed to appoint a meeting of the society of South Cambrian Bowmen, of which he was a member.

Sir Francis, who plumed himself on having gained so potent an advantage, was, however, far from suspecting to what influence besides his own he was indebted for this concession; or, that a slight quarrel between Lady Mariamne and Lord Carloville had assisted the
revolution

revolution in his favour. For Carloville, who contrived very dexterously to practise a new species of oeconomy upon Sir Francis's affairs, was decidedly against the meeting; judging from his turn for show, and the excessive splendour that always reigned in his most ordinary entertainments, that this, which was intended to include a very large number of guests, would be proportionally expensive.

But Lady Mariamne, whose impatience that something decided should be done by Carloville for the recovery of Ethelreda's person, and whose evil conscience always prompted her to suspect her confederate of treachery and disguise in his intentions towards her, and researches after the lost Ethelreda, had of late, in order to quiet her apprehensions, employed spies on his servants; by whose means, according to the instructions these emissaries had received, she

3 suspected

suspected him of holding a correspondence with his wife, whilst to her he protested and swore the most profound ignorance of every thing that concerned her. Lady Mariamne received the directions of all his letters; amongst which a woman's name tortured and distracted her soul, and made her conclude this correspondent under a feigned name could be no other than Ethelreda.

After having endured for some weeks the misery of distrust; withheld from opening the letters, more from a fear of discovery, than right principles; not daring to avow her suspicions to Carloville, lest he should at once discontinue his attentions and own the truth—(for the motives of his attachment she had not yet penetrated, and she felt that, deeply as Carloville had found means to ingratiate himself, any explanation that destroyed her illusion, unprincipled as it was, would be insupportable)—
thus

thus irritated by surmises not without foundation, her naturally imperious temper could not restrain itself within the bounds of civility even to Carloville, whose scrutinizing eye perceived the alteration in her countenance when she addressed him, even before it had influenced her manner. It was with serious alarm he first discerned her constrained and half-rude behaviour, and dreaded, from what he called the natural fickleness of her sex, the overthrow of all his schemes before they were mature.

The first decided symptom of a revolt was her ladyship's half-reluctant and ungracious acquiescence in Sir Francis's proposal for the autumn meeting of South Cambrian Bowmen, at Casino Belvidere.

Carloville now perceived it was time to ask for an explanation of her conduct, so diametrically opposite to the plan they

they had laid down and agreed to follow. Lady Mariamne at first was sulky, and refused to account for her changed deportment, or to allow that her manners towards Lord Carloyville were altered; but her pride, though powerful, was inferior to her partiality. After two or three sweeps across the room, with the tone and countenance of an enraged Sultana, she bad him ask his own heart, which could sufficiently explain to him the reasons of her conduct.

"I have no heart!" cried he gaily, seizing her hand, "and I perceive that all this confusion arises from your having two!"

Angry as she was, Lady Mariamne could not avoid half dismissing her frown; and, lowering her voice to a more peaceable tone, though her manner was determined and serious, she said, "It is true, my lord, I have no actual right to control your conduct, and

and though you have long protested to me my entire power over your affections, I cannot help thinking—I suspect—

“What? What do you suspect?” cried Carlovile impatiently.

“That you are at this moment in correspondence with that woman, whom I detest, whom I abhor, whom I suspect—I know that I am your dupe!”

Carlovile was famous for presence of mind: he seized both the hands of the irritated lady, fortunately recollecting that Cicero by a bold figure calls them the *orator's weapons*; then, steadily looking in her face as if to observe her countenance, he said, “It is very true, I have been writing to her this morning.”

Lady Marianne could not speak; but she struggled violently to release her hands.

“One moment's patience!” cried he.

“Let

"Let me entreat you to be calm whilst I explain myself."

"Calm!" cried she, finding utterance for her rage, in a terrifying tone.

"She is dying, she is dead, perhaps!" exclaimed Carloville, alarmed at her vehemence, and the daemoniac air of her countenance.

"A falsehood! a lie! infamous—dissembling—"

"'Tis true, upon my soul! by all that's sacred!" repeated Carloville, with many oaths. "You will not suffer me to explain myself," said he, taking advantage of the silence of her rage, "but I swear to you, and you shall dictate the oath, to bring you proofs of the truth if you still doubt me;—but I have some time known the place of her concealment. In hopes of securing her person, and sparing you the anxiety of suspense, I have refrained from communicating

municating the discovery to you ; but I am now credibly informed by an agent whom I cannot suspect of collusion, that this woman, whom you, and I more especially, have so much reason to hate, is at her last gasp."

"Is it true? Is it possible?" exclaimed Lady Mariamne, in a kind of transport. "Carloville," added she, lowering her voice, "if she die, we shall be happy : but if you have deceived me, if you can be such a devil, you shall find me one."

"I shall deserve it of you," said Carloville, kissing her hand, which she held out to him in reconciliation, as he was about to take leave. "You forgive me, then?"

"Certainly.—I shall see you to-morrow?"

"No, not to-morrow ; that will be impossible ; but as soon as I can leave the Castle. Adieu ! dear lady Mariamne !"

CHAP.

"Adio,

"Adio, Carlovill!" cried the passive creature.

"Devil!" repeated Carlovill, as he walked down the terrace to his horses, which waited for him.—"Devil! I implicitly believe her ladyship!—a demon—a salamander—Tisiphone herself is an angel of meekness to such a woman!"

"I shall believe it of you," said Carlovill, kissing her hand, which she held out to him in reconciliation, as he was about to make leave. "You forgive me, then?"

"Certainly—I shall see you to-morrow?"

"No, not to-morrow; that will be impossible; but as soon as I can leave the castle, Adio! dear lady Marianne!"

"Adio!"

CHAP. XL.

Praising what is lost,
Makes the remembrance dear.

SHAKESPEARE.

NOT many days after this fracas with Lady Mariamne, Lord Carloville, in examining every part of the domain, and in computing its value, accidentally strolled into the Church, which had been represented to him by the domestics of the Castle as wanting repairs, which Sir Francis L'Esterling, altogether careless about the condition of either the Church or the Castle, for want of proper representations, had neglected doing; and the parish, which consisted only of the villages of St. Siffrid and Strathener,

Strathener, were unable from their poverty, and indeed unused, to contribute to it; whilst the L'Esterlings, the pious and munificent lords of St. Siffrid, took the whole expence of its repairs and decorations upon themselves.

Whilst Carlovill strolled round the Church and examined its mouldering structure, its fretted ceiling defective from time, and partly concealed by the ivy which crept through the windows in those places where the emblazoned arms had deserted their high posts, affording an almost inaccessible refuge to birds, and a most striking example of the poverty and emptiness of the highest pitch of human grandeur;—when he turned towards the tomb of Sir Roger, who had taken such delight in those escutcheons, and the domain that descended to him through so many ancestors, and but faintly, in contemplating the marble that represented him,

retraced

retraced those features once animated by beneficence though tinged with enthusiasm ;—something like conscience occasioned an emotion of remorse he never before experienced ; a cold chilliness came over him ; his teeth knocked together ; and, with a horrid glare, he stood with his eyes fixed upon the calm and peaceful countenance of the father of the injured Ethelreda, till he could no longer support himself, and fell upon his knees upon the upper step of the chancel. His head struck upon the rail of the communion-table ; the blow partly stunned him, but the pain had dispelled the horrors of his mind. He attempted to rise ; the step on which he knelt had been broken by the falling of some of the stone-work from the roof ; it moved as he moved : he looked down, and discovered amongst its fragments a ring—the very ring with which he had married

ried

ried Ethelreda ! for on the inside were his own initials.

In a moment the youthful and innocent Ethelreda presented herself to his recollection in all her fascinating beauty and attractions, to which his avenging conscience failed not to add the injuries and irretrievable misfortunes he had heaped upon her. The scene was become too horrid for his senses to bear : he sprung upon his feet, and cursed his existence aloud ; he struck his forehead with violence, and, searching his pockets for some instrument of destruction, thought only of ending his present agonies. Then rushing furiously out of the Church in order to execute his design, not many paces from the church-yard he encountered De Clerac, who with all the joyous hilarity of his nation began to rally him on his haste and distrait air, and to inquire news of Lady Mariamne. The sound of a human voice presently relieved

relieved Carloville from the torments of the lower world he fancied he had been suffering. The name of Lady Mariamne helped to remind him of his actual situation, and of the ring which he still held in his hand, the advantages of possessing which then occurred to him. He silently deposited it in his pocket-book. "It is a temptation of the devil!" thought he, "who would not have dared to assist me, if any good spirit had hopes of my reformation."

"Who is in the Castle, De Clerac?" said he, recovering from his reverie, which had afforded the Count some room for speculation.

"Castlebar, and Fitz-Piers; the others are out fishing."

"Let us join them, and play a little before dinner; we shall have no time afterwards."

"Allons donc!"

In the breakfasting-room Carloville
VOL. III. F found

found his comrades engaged at piquet. Their game ended, a new party was formed, and all sat down to casino; and Carloville, whose head was a little relieved from the frightful visions of remorse that haunted him, at intervals attended to his game, and came to a decided arrangement of his designs on Lady Mariamne.

"Upon my soul, it won't do!" cried he, throwing down his cards and starting from his chair.

"Zounds! we had won the game! I have it in my hand!" cried his partner.

"N'importe!" exclaimed De Clerac joyfully: "Nous nous en féliciterons, Monsieur de *Fiz-Pierre*."

"I beg your pardon, Castlebar," said Carloville. "I am distracted—My wife—It won't do—I cannot forget her!"

"Phoo!" exclaimed Castlebar. "Could
not

not you play out the hand for thinking of your wife?"

"To think of her now is all I can do; it is true she hated me; but she is dead, and I forgive her!"

"Dead!!!—" at once repeated the whole group.

"What!" cried Fitz-Piers, "is that lovely creature mortal?" pointing to an admirable portrait of Ethelreda, which hung over the chimney.

"She was indeed a lovely creature!" dolefully echoed Carloville.

"If she be not fair for me,

What care I *how* fair she be?" scornfully repeated the unfeeling Sir Dennis Castlebar.

"That fellow's a brute, by Jove!" exclaimed Fitz-Piers, "But," continued he, "since I have seen that picture, it has always been my wonder how any man could be such a monster as to desert so exquisite a creature!"

"How cursedly stupid you all seem!" said Carloville fretfully. "Have I not told you, when her father died we were left with five hundred pounds, which would not have kept me from starving more than a week?"

"No matter! Had she fallen to my lot, I would have lived upon acorns, rather than have been separated from her!" said Fitz-Piers gravely.

"Morbleu!" said De Clerac.

"You are a romantic ass, Fitz-Piers!" said Castlebar.

"You would have thought the diet but indifferent, Fitz-Piers," said Carloville. "I must provide myself with mourning though!" after a long pause.

"I shall set off for town to-morrow," rejoined Fitz-Piers. "Can I carry your orders?"

"Oh hang it, Fitz-Piers! you shall not leave us. Sir Dennis, Count, try to prevail on him to stay till we have had

had a little sport : to-morrow we turn out a buck : in the course of a week the new beagles will be come down ; and Sunday—oh curse me if you go before Sunday ! *I must go to church*, and you shall take the benefit of that ceremony with me !”

“ You want nothing then but a hunting-coat ?” said Fitz-Piers, with an ironical and contemptuous countenance.

“ No sneering, Fitz ! You know I cannot bear it. But if you are determined to go, you shall order the *black gear* for me and my household : but remember, ‘tis not alone my inky cloak, good cousin !”

“ Nay, let the devil wear black ! I’ll have a suit of ermine !” cried Castlebar, with a loud laugh.

Though Fitz-Piers had led a life of dissipation and thoughtlessness, he could not but feel disgust at Carlovill’s manner,

ner, against which all feeling and decency revolted. His greatest misfortune, and in reality his greatest crime, was his intimacy with Carlovile—an intimacy which had ruined his morals, drawn upon him the displeasure of a relation whom he ought to have respected, and considerably deranged his pecuniary affairs.

And this infatuation proceeded not from any thing captivating Fitz-Piers saw in Carlovile, but from their unfortunate relationship; which having obliged them to pass the early part of their lives together, the rooted profligacy of the former had imperceptibly influenced the manners of the latter (who continually perceived his errors without the resolution to reform them), and had at length grown into habit. But his sense of decency, weakened as it was, was too strong to allow him to join in this new outrage against the customs of the world; he

he therefore invariably adhered to his determination of departing immediately, though Lord Carloville, who took a kind of pleasure in his company, strongly urged him to stay.

CHAP. XLI.

A rage of pleasure madden'd every breast ;
 Down to the lowest lees the ferment ran :
 Thus Vice the standard rear'd : her arrier-ban
 Corruption call'd ; and loud she gave the word,
 " Mind, mind yourselves ! Why should the vulgar
 " man,
 " The lacquey, be more virtuous than his lord ?
 " Enjoy this span of life, 'tis all the gods afford."

CASTLE OF INDOLENCE.

THE household, as is usually the case, was tinctured with the vices of its head. All was profligacy, swearing, and extravagance, from the maître d'hôtel down to the helpers in the stables.

Winifred and Llewellyn, who had no post in the service of Lord Carlovile, who received no wages, and indeed were only suffered to remain at the Castle because they were overlooked,
 and

and because it was perfectly immaterial, passed but unpleasant lives, exposed to the ridicule and taunts of such an unprincipled and lawless set, whose manners would have disgraced a banditti. But in order to escape from their insults, both Llewellyn and Winifred avoided as much as possible all intercourse with them, by retiring to the unfrequented parts of the Castle, among which the apartments of the late Sir Roger were now included. In the state drawing-room, which was on the same floor, a beam had lately given way, so that the whole suite was reckoned defective, and consequently not used. When therefore the mourning was distributed, they were not even thought of, nor did they pay any belief to the servants when they gaily told them, they were in mourning for their mistress.

Winifred and Llewellyn never left the walls of the Castle, lest by the caprice

of its lord, or more properly that of his servants, they should never find a re-entrance. So that, discrediting all they heard, and without any other opportunity of information, had Ethelreda even been desirous of hearing of what occurrences passed in the Castle or its neighbourhood, they could not have gratified her, because they could not depend upon the sincerity of their informers.

But this was never the case. Ethelreda was uniformly silent with regard to the Castle, or its vicinity; but always anxious to hear how her two faithful servants were accommodated in the family, and studious to console and apologize to them for the many insults they submitted to bear without complaining. It was in one of these conversations that Ethelreda learned with grief the decaying state of the Castle. And though she no longer had any interest in its duration, her affection for every stone that composed

composed its walls was as violent as ever. She felt a strong desire once more to wander through the spacious apartments, to look through the windows towards the sea, and more than all, to contemplate the portraits of her father and mother; or to ascend the turret at the end of the gallery and wander amongst the battlements; to feel the cool breezes from the water, to admire the firmament by night, or to watch the glorious sun rising over the towers of Strathener.

Ethelreda took a melancholy pleasure in repeating this wish, though she looked upon it as impracticable. She would sometimes wander through the dark passages of her subterraneous territory, and, half timid, half courageous, would almost approach the aperture into the library, when she guessed the family was retired to rest: but the chirping of a cricket, or the rustling of the wind, would fill her with consternation, and

make her relinquish her undertaking with terror and affright. But notwithstanding the imaginary danger that attended the gratification of this wish, which was become so dear to her, Ethelreda failed not to repeat the attempt; till, grown bolder and less subject to be scared by the noises she constantly heard, in the dead midnight she ascended to the library, furnished with a lamp. After many pauses she ventured to emerge from her cavern, and, precipitately crossing the room, lifted up the arras, and by a private door immediately let herself into the drawing-room.

It presented the most melancholy picture of decay Ethelreda had ever beheld. The gilding of the richly-carved chimney-piece was entirely obscured by dust: for want of the fires which were constantly used in Sir Roger's time, the crimson hangings, before grown black and discoloured, were now rotted by the damp,

damp, and dropping from the walls on the side next the sea, where, from being most exposed to the weather, several panes had fallen out of the windows, affording easy access to rain, damp, and dews. The portraits had suffered in the same degree, particularly some on wood, whose pannels had dropped from their frames and shivered into splinters. "They were painted by Holbein!" said Ethelreda; then glancing her eyes along the floor, and perceiving its unequal surface, "It will last, at least, as long as I shall!"—she continued, her eyes full of tears. Then hastily quitting this humiliating scene of former grandeur, she advanced to her father's apartment. Here the rooms were in better repair, though they had as long been deserted: both the portraits and the furniture were in tolerable preservation, from having been less exposed to the storms of the winter. Ethelreda gazed upon them with melancholy rapture,

rapture, and could have forgotten that hours passed away, and have suffered the day-break to surprise her, had not her declining lamp, faintly dying, obliged her to recollect that it was time to return to her prison.

It was not without regret that Ethelreda quitted the silent but honourable company of her ancestors, for her more solitary cell; nor without a fixed resolution of returning at all opportunities to meditate, and contemplate all that remained of countenances so dear to her.

C H A P. XLII.

Many are the sayings of the wise
 In ancient and in modern books enroll'd,
 Extolling patience as the truest fortitude;
 And to the bearing well of all calamities,
 All chances incident to man's frail life;
 Consolatories writ
 Lenient of grief and anxious thought.

MILTON.

THE report of Ethelreda's death was presently circulated without the walls of the Castle, and speedily known at Strathener; but received as a report without confirmation by Mrs. Conway, who drew presages from her hopes rather than her fears.

But when the family at St. Siffrid's made its appearance at Church, the truth was no longer to be doubted. Even
 Lady

Lady Mariamne, who had heard the report, but had received no intimation or visit from Carloville, was compelled to dismiss her distrust when she heard of the mourning, which she condemned as an unmerited mark of respect to the memory of her detested rival; who, she almost lamented, had escaped the ignominy with which she had long hoped to see her overwhelmed.

At Strathener, the certainty of Ethelreda's death was very differently received by Mrs. Conway, who deplored with many tears her early fate, and anticipated inwardly all the horrors that Conway would, or had perhaps already suffered at losing his most distant hopes for ever. When she considered what agonies of sorrow he might at that moment be suffering, she forgave him all his neglectful silence, and ardently longed to console and soothe him under his misfortunes. Lady Octavia could

not refrain from expressing her surprise and wonder, without observing how much the subject distressed Mrs. Conway. Mr. Conway was uniformly silent; nevertheless he had already, in idea, availed himself of Lady Carloville's decease; since he imagined Conway's visionary marriage, and all the illusions that had so long clouded his intellects, would be at once removed by the well-attested story of her death. He therefore concluded it was time to take Mrs. Conway into his councils, in order to give weight and validity to the communications he was in haste to make to his son. It was with mingled grief and astonishment she heard the account of her son's violent illness and long confinement, for which Mr. Conway did not pretend to assign any motive; nor did she attempt to repress the reproaches with which her heart was full, for his having suffered her to remain in ignorance.

rance of Conway's abode, when he stood so much in need of her watching and attendance. She did not wait for Mr. Conway to propose her departure, but immediately gave orders for a carriage to be got ready, determining to remain some time at Frampton Lodge, at least till Conway was able or inclined to return with her to Strathener. She had taken upon herself the task of communicating to him what had so recently happened in the family of Carloville, though she dreaded the effects it might have, from the violence of his passions, and the fervor of his attachments.

Mr. Conway, in relating the circumstances of his son's illness, had purposely omitted that part of it connected with the arrest and the subsequent phrensy; and lest Dr. Felton should think proper to be more accurate in his details, Mr. Conway wrote a note, dictating to him the representation he wished him to
make

make of the state of Conway's health, with so many plausible reasons for this slight deviation from truth as would, he doubted not, have their full weight with the Doctor in quieting any scruples he might have at making this concealment from the mother of his patient, because they were intended to operate so much to his advantage. The servant who was charged with this note, had particular directions from his master to deliver it to Dr. Felton before Mrs. Conway entered the house.

In arriving at Frampton, the first object that struck Mrs. Conway's sight, was Conway himself, but so changed as scarcely to preserve more than the traces of his former countenance. He was without a hat, and, notwithstanding the sun shone with extreme heat and brightness, he stood leaning with both arms upon the gate, looking straight forwards without appearing to see the carriage which

which was approaching: his hair was quite without powder, and so unused to dressing, that it had returned to its original wave; his complexion sun-burnt; and his eyes, though still the same in size and colour, had lost all their spirit and much of their intelligence. The carriage stopped close to the gate: a servant advanced to open it. Mrs. Conway, whose unpleasant thoughts had prevented her from observing what was passing, now looked towards the gate, and, altered and neglected as his person was, immediately recognised her son. "Henry!—my dear Henry!"—cried she mournfully.

"My mother?"—exclaimed Conway, scarcely lifting up his head so as to see through his long eyelashes,—
"Yes!—it is my mother herself!"—advancing towards the carriage and assisting her to alight, whilst in her impatience she had opened the door.

"Oh,

"Oh, Henry! my dear Henry! you are very ill?—You are not recovered?—You do not seem glad to see me?"

"I cannot seem glad even to see you," said Conway, taking his mother's hand. "I wish I could forgive you, madam: I wish I could forget your unkindness," added he after a pause.

"Do not upbraid me, Harry;—it is true I have deserted you, I have left you to strangers in a dangerous illness:—it was not intentionally, yet at this moment how much do I suffer at seeing you!—I shudder at the miseries I have but half escaped!"

"And I," cried Conway, "have no way of escaping from mine!—Yes, one way!" he added in a low tone.

"For my sake exert yourself! But for my sake, my dear Conway!"

"But for you!—but for you I should have seen her once more!" said he in a frightful tone. "I should have heard her

her last words—she would have tried to console me—she would have told me her last wishes, and in sacredly fulfilling them I should have found some alleviation of our misfortunes :—but we are parted—separated—torn asunder, never to meet again !”

“ It is too true !” said Mrs. Conway, whose tears choked her utterance, partly for Ethelreda, but more for the agony she saw her son suffering. “ If you give way to this despair, you will kill me, Henry,” said she, as he walked on at a quick pace ; not appearing to listen to any thing she said. “ For Heaven’s sake, let me speak to you !” cried she, observing he walked towards a stream that ran through the lawn which led to the house—“ I would talk to you of Mrs. Carloville—of Ethelreda !”

There was a charm in the name that had not yet lost its effect. Conway slowly returned ; Mrs. Conway eagerly caught

his arm. "Whither were you going?" said she.

"I was going to walk."

"And to leave me—I, who have not seen you so long?"

"Forgive me, my dear mother!" cried he, hastily; "I will not leave you—at least, not to-day—But you said something of Ethelreda?"

"Be calm, my dear Harry—When did you see her last?"

"Don't—don't ask me!" cried he, relapsing into phrensy—"I shall be mad—I am raving—!"

"Oh, Conway!—were you then with her in her last moments?—You have seen her then in the agonies of death, and the dreadful scene has turned your brain!"

"What death?—What agonies?" repeated Conway, with a stupid kind of calmness.

Mrs. Conway was silent: she scarcely
knew

knew herself what she had been saying; she knew not whether the recital she had to make, would calm or provoke his passion; and whilst she was debating in the most dreadful irresolution, what measures were best to be adopted in order to restore Conway in some degree to reason and resignation, they reached the entrance. Conway accompanied his mother to the door of the hall, and, with some remains of those polished manners that had once so much distinguished him, entreated she would pardon his absence an hour or two.

There was something in Conway's tone, though extremely composed, that almost took away her senses; she looked stedfastly at him; all the emotion and wildness of his countenance had given place to the most uninformed vacancy; "You shall not leave me!" cried Mrs. Conway, grasping his arm with both her hands.

"Excuse

"Excuse me! I must go. I have an engagement," said he, trying gently to release himself; "I will certainly return—before supper, perhaps—to-night at all events you will see me again."

Mrs. Conway half shrieked with terror; his manner seemed to indicate some desperate meaning she dared not suffer herself to penetrate; she tried to speak, but could not find words. "Ethelreda!" was the only sound she could utter.

"I understand you," said Conway, in the same tone of composure. "She is dead. I will not oblige you to reproach her memory for my distraction and extravagance—dispose of me as you please; but do not attempt to console me, or torment me with those foolish words, reason and fortitude."—Conway led the way towards a parlour; Mrs. Conway followed, and silently and sorrowfully walked to a window, though, blinded by her tears, she could discern

no object through it. Conway threw himself upon a sofa, and, leaning his head upon his hand, betrayed no traces of emotion, uneasiness, or sorrow. Indeed, so totally was he absorbed in his own wretchedness, that it is doubtful whether he sufficiently retained his faculties to be conscious of feeling any.

It was not long before Dr. Felton made his appearance, and, addressing Mrs. Conway with his usual mild and benevolent manner, at once engaged her esteem, and by degrees diverted her grief. She related to him, as far as she had been made acquainted, every thing of Conway's attachment to Mrs. Carloville except her name, though of her own she made no secret, or of the designs of Mr. Conway or his family. Dr. Felton, who for the first time understood the degree of relationship in which his patient stood to the person who had made him so many visits (for, from the
thyness

thyness and delicacy of his disposition, he had never enquired even of Conway), was too discreet not to attend to the written instructions he had received, or to mention any of the oppressive measures that had been used towards Conway, and in some degree contributed towards his present despondency. After much persuasion, Mrs. Conway was prevailed on by the Doctor to retire and take some rest after her fatigues, who promised to remain with his patient, and, if possible, induce him to take some repose to allay the fever of his mind and recruit his exhausted spirits. Doctor Felton had had too many proofs of the inefficacy of the undertaking, to hope much from his own oratory on his patient's disorder; but he was one of those who are not easily wearied in well-doing. He thought it was his duty to exhort Conway to a more resigned and christian temper, and to bear his misfor-

tunes more submissively. But he might have bestowed his exhortations on the winds, or have preached to the stones: for a long time he could obtain no other answer than prayers and entreaties to be left alone, or at least in silence; and at others threats of escaping from his harangues and taking up his abode in the fields—a threat there was some risque of his executing, had not bodily weakness rendered him less turbulent in reality than intention. When words failed, with still less hope of success the Doctor had recourse to prescriptions; he entreated him in the most affectionate manner to take an opiate he had prepared for him.

“I care not how soon I sleep—” said Conway: “but it shall not be to wake again.”

“I do not so much blame cowardice in bearing pain,” said Dr. Felton with somewhat less than his usual mildness,

“as

“as that selfishness in misfortunes which makes men forget those who suffer in their sufferings; that is cowardice which makes men impious in adversity.”

“A man would die, though he were neither valiant nor miserable—only from weariness of doing the same things over and over again—and I—” continued Conway—“I, who have not one single solace, or inducement to the love of life—”

“Ah, my dear friend!” cried the Doctor, “do not let Seneca’s having written that sentence induce you to repeat it. It is true, a mind fixed and bent on good and celestial things, steals gradually from the fear of death; but shall you dare to justify yourself in withdrawing from adversity, and in preparing for yourself unknown punishments in a world to come, because you will not bear the disappointments allotted to you

in this—the loss of an idol of your own making? And amongst your forgotten inducements to exert your reason, and cherish the love of life, do you include your parents, whose only child you are?—Do you forget your mother's life depends on yours?"

"You may try to convince my reason!" cried Conway, impatiently; "but you cannot conquer my despair by arguments. Revenge triumphs over death; love flights it; honour courts it; fear anticipates it; grief flies to it!"

"It is possible to pervert the sense of the most moral writers, as you have now. But what an exalted speech is that of the Stoic whom you just quoted! 'That the good things which belong to prosperity are to be wished, but the good things which belong to adversity are to be admired.' And how much more glorious is it to bear adversity,

sity, than to sink under it ! Fortitude is the principal virtue of adversity ; and adversity is amongst the beatitudes——”

“ I cannot bear the word,” cried Conway, impatiently. “ Fortitude !—that most chimerical of all virtues !”

“ I wish,” said the Doctor mildly, “ you would be patient, and suffer me to convince you, that I myself am an example of its efficacy, joined to the strongest of all the supports the goodness of Providence can bestow—a strong sense of religion.—It is true, I impose the most painful recollections on myself, by recapitulating what I have suffered in the misfortunes of those with whom I was most intimately connected, and for whom I have always felt the strongest affections my heart is capable of feeling ! Judge of those then, when I tell you I had a nephew of nearly my own age, for whose sake I never married, because, though he formed a connection I dis-

liked, I feared his circumstances would not be equal to his manner of living. In order more effectually to serve him, I took to the study of a profession in which I had not been educated, and went to the West Indies to practise it, and to superintend my estate for the same reasons : nothing but his interest could ever have induced me to leave him, for even now I cannot remember calmly the trouble of separating. Perhaps it seems the more bitter to me," continued the Doctor, with tears in his eyes, "because it was a final one ; for he died whilst I was in Antigua, leaving a son two years bld, a daughter but a few months, and a wife in a consumption. In a very short time the care of the whole family devolved on me. I hope—I believe I discharged my trust whilst they were under my care : but, how many reproaches—how much grief, perhaps all, might I have been spared, had I never consented
to

to part with them ! But their father had a married sister, whose situation and character in life made her certainly in all appearance a more eligible person to bring up a girl, than a single man of retired habits and but little experience.

“ The boy was sent to Eton, and afterwards to a university ; such was the plan of education laid down for him by his father : I do not therefore blame myself for his vices, so much as the example to which he has been unavoidably exposed ; and to new-mould a dissipated temper, all the preachings of an old man are ineffectual.

“ But my dear Ellen !—She would have been safe with me.—she would have learned to distinguish the libertines and empty coxcombs of the age—she would have despised them and escaped their snares, had she been exposed to any. Oh ! It was this deepest of

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misfor-

misfortunes that called forth the principles of religion and fortitude to save me from deeds of desperation—at first without the excuse of madness; but when the search grew more hopeless, when I only closed my eyes to see my beloved friend and hear him ask for his daughter—when I only woke to feel the full extent of my calamity, to deplore the trust which I appeared to have neglected, and to be convinced it was irretrievable—it was then my senses began to fail! I perceived it myself. I besought those about me to secure my person, that I might not do myself a violence; for in the height of my phrensy I depended on seeing my beloved Ellen again. I vainly hoped, out of humanity to me she would attempt to see me and justify herself—and I was predetermined to believe her story—But, alas! that day of consolation never came!

“ My

"My delirium was but temporary. When I was allowed the use of books, the bible was my best physician; it taught me to find out a pleasure that nothing can rob me of—that of doing good to others."

"I would to heaven I could find your Ellen!" cried Conway, in an animated tone; forgetting for a moment, with all the native generosity of his character, his own grief in that of his afflicted and benevolent friend. "Did you never hear of her?"

"Never!" said the Doctor, observing with pleasure the effect of his recital. "Never!—from the hour she left her home to the present moment!—It is too mysterious to think of patiently—But she is dead! She is certainly dead! It is now seven years since that fatal Christmas day when her cousins and her brother waited in the hall to see her. But she never came!—It was an unfor-

runate family—unfortunate in all its branches.”

There was something similar in the story to Conway's own; he fell into a deep and gloomy musing. The Doctor could scarcely exert himself to draw him out of it by conversation. It was not long however before he perceived at least one good effect from his benevolently intended recital, which he had made with so much pain to himself: if his arguments had not convinced, they had wearied his patient, for he perceived he was fallen into a kind of slumber, than which nothing could be more conducive to his bodily re-establishment; and when once that could be brought to a state of convalescence, the health of the mind, he doubted not, would improve in proportion.

C H A P. XLIII.

Thou see'st we are not all along unhappy :
This wide and universal theatre
Presents more woeful pageants than the scene
Wherein we play.

SHAKESPEARE.

WHETHER or not the Doctor's arguments had had any real good effect on Conway's grief, his mother was surprised at the alteration of his manners when she met him in the morning. It is true, his countenance was the same ; but he no longer endured their remonstrances and consolations with frantic extravagance, nor did he give way to a fullness and silence still more alarming. He endeavoured to reply to their questions, though in incoherent sentences ;
he

he tried to answer their arguments, and even to smile at the folly and want of connection in his own : nor did he contradict the Doctor, whose exultation in his amendment for once made him take the whole merit to himself, and, contrary to his usual diffident manner, instead of evading Mrs. Conway's thanks and grateful acknowledgements, to receive and listen to them with extreme pleasure.

Notwithstanding the inward feelings of Conway's heart were as acute as ever, he could not help perceiving the obligations he was under to his kind physician for having made so painful an effort to console his afflictions and combat his despair. It was therefore partly out of gratitude, and to spare him the pain of perceiving the inefficacy of his attempts, that Conway put a constraint on himself, whilst his soul was torn with a thousand emotions ; and partly to de-
ceive

ceive his mother, whose anxiety and terrors he read in her countenance; but still more, to impose on them an idea of his calmness, that he might escape from their watchful observation without raising their distrust, and in solitude give himself up to the excesses of his grief, that still knew no bounds, and turned from society and the sound of consolation with disgust and abhorrence. This stratagem succeeded. Neither Mrs. Conway nor the Doctor suspected the speciousness of his appearance: they applauded and congratulated him on the power of his reason and his exertion of it; whilst Conway, sickening at the sound of their voices, to which he dared not but listen, would seize the first opportunity of flying to solitude, where he would give himself up to all the extravagance of distraction, and, shutting out all external objects and ideas, would brood inwardly upon his own misery, till

till some messenger from the house obliged him to return and practise the appearance of tranquillity, ten times more torturing than the most unbounded indulgence of sorrow.

From time to time Mrs. Conway dispatched messengers to Strathener with accounts rather satisfactory than otherwise, from which Mr. Conway drew good presages of the success of his schemes; and, judging from the hopes to which in her letters Mrs. Conway gave way, that his son was sufficiently recovered (though but three weeks since she had been at Frampton) to hear patiently of Octavia, he determined not to delay much longer a conversation on the subject—though he by no means thought it expedient to employ Mrs. Conway in the negotiation, because he knew her tenderness would not permit her to enforce his arguments, when she perceived the reluctance of Conway.

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The business in every stage was perplexing: he did not wish to recall Mrs. Conway, and scarcely dared to leave Octavia a moment, the sincerity of whose promises he strongly suspected; not doubting, should she contrive to make any explanations with the Count de Clerac-Auxerre, but she would avail herself of his absence to realise her first intentions; to which the pleasure of destroying his would, he very well knew, be no inconsiderable inducement. But floating as he was in irresolution, he did not suffer himself to be surprised into a less vigilant attention to his niece, to whose arts he did no more than justice in supposing her capable of deceiving a stricter Argus than himself.

CHAP.

C H A P. XLIV.

Thou'rt woman, a true copy of the first,
 In whom the race of all mankind were curs'd;
 Your sex by beauty was to heav'n ally'd,
 But your great lord, the devil, taught you pride;
 He too an angel till he durst rebel;
 And you are sure the stars that with him fell.

Orwin.

THE family at St. Siffred's had no sooner performed the farce of going to church in mourning, than Carloville, impatient to pursue his hitherto successful plot, hastened to pay a visit at Casino Belvidere.

Lady Marianne alone received him; but with less rapture than he expected from his sable appearance, which in reality was all that displeased her.

"I cannot perceive the necessity of your wearing mourning," said she angrily:

grily : " it was a compliment that woman by no means deserved."

" It is not out of compliment to her that I wear it, but decency—the customs of the world."

" Nonsense ! The customs of the world ! You ought to have been superior to them : the world would easily have forgiven any failure of respect to a person whom all the world hated. Besides, it was a compliment I expected."

" My dear Lady Marianne, you seem to mistake the motive. Unless I had worn this hypocritical dress, I should have taken all the confirmation from the fact it now receives ; at least people would have doubted—it would have been guessed there was some motive for concealment—enquiries would have been made, the wretchedness of her situation would have been discovered, and then to all intents and purposes the pity and compassion would have

have fallen to her lot, and you and I must have taken up with the odium."

"True," said Lady Mariamne, recollecting herself. "But you tell me nothing in detail: who gave you the information of her death? and how did you hear of her wretchedness? In fact, what proofs have you that she is dead? that it is not a stratagem to deceive you into some error that may leave you open to the law? I confess I cannot be without suspicions, because I know her capable of such malignancy."

Carloville half smiled: "There is a great deal of colour for all this distrust; but I believe you will scarcely be less credulous than I am on the subject; yet I am thoroughly convinced, though I have but this one evidence," said he, taking a small bit of paper from his pocket-book, ragged, dirty, and ill written, and presenting it to Lady Mariamne.

Her

Her Ladyship with a scornful eye and distended nostril, as if the effluvia had been disagreeable to her, only touched it with the extreme points of her fingers. "The late Lady Carlovile, it must be confessed, wrote a good hand!" said she, glancing her eyes over the paper: "but it baffles my skill! I must trouble you to read it."

Carlovile, unfolding the paper, took out a ring, and read:

"HONOURED SIR,

"Please to pardon my boldness in addressing your lordship, because I do not do it from my own presumption, but my mistress's orders, who died last night. The inclosed ring I took from her finger after she was dead, as she commanded me to do, and here inclose it to your lordship; and to say it was the first time it had ever been off her
finger

finger since you put it on. 'I hope your lordship will not refuse to send something to bury her ladyship, as she has left nothing of value, and it must otherwise be done by the parish.

"Pray, your lordship, do not take it amiss, the liberty of informing you that my Lady hired me in London under the name of Mrs. Winstone, and that half a year's wages are due, which I leave to your lordship's generosity to settle; humbly adding, I have been a faithful servant to her ladyship in all her distress and sickness.

"I am, with many prayers to your lordship to forgive this liberty,

"Your lordship's most obedient,

"humble servant, &c.

"S. ELLIS."

Carloville, having shown Lady Mari-
anne the ring, and made her observe

the letters which proved to him its identity, carefully replaced both that and the letter in his pocket-book.

“ Well !” said Lady Marianne, after a short silence, “ she is certainly dead then ?”

“ Certainly. I had yesterday an account of her funeral ; she was interred yesterday or Saturday, I forget which ; at least my messenger, who is returned, told me it was so intended.”

“ Pray—you have not yet told me where all this happened ? in England or Wales ? ”

“ In—Somersetshire. I will own to you, I have long known her abode ; that I have even tried to negotiate with her by letter ; but I have always found her so firm in maintaining her own innocence and the purity of her life, that I cared not to communicate to you what I knew would afflict you : in short, that
I was

I was hopeless of obtaining a legal separation. But I was determined to ascertain this *last* piece of intelligence by the corroboration of a witness whom I could depend upon: therefore, instead of sending my remittances for the funeral by the mail, I dispatched a messenger with orders fully to inform himself of the truth of all I have been relating, and even to see the body. He however only saw the coffin, because the lid was closed. The inscription he copied from the plate was simply, 'Ethelreda L'Esterling, in the twenty-first year of her age. Descended from the baroners of that name, of St. Siffred's Castle.' This last circumstance," continued Carloville, "was the most convincing to me, because I recognize in it all that family pride and romance, the characteristic of herself and her relations." He added, "she desired to be buried in the church-yard

yard of a small village near which she resided, without stone or inscription to mark the spot."

"What an excess of pride! Yet what affectation of humility!" exclaimed Lady Marianne. "Yes, yes! these are sufficient at any time to identify her."

"I think," said Carloville, pausing, "in order to prevent the Harwoods from troubling us—as they most assuredly will, if they suspect their sister has been in distressed circumstances through my means—I think it will be expedient to put a scheme in practice that has already occurred to me, which shall make it appear to them she has hitherto evaded me; and, instead of dying in Somersetshire, that she has resided in one of the catholic cantons of Switzerland under a feigned name; where, as heretics are buried with very little ceremony, it will be utterly impos-

sible for them ever to detect the imposition. Do you approve?"

Before Lady Mariamne could give her assent, Sir Francis entered the room and put an end to the conversation. In a few minutes Lady Mariamne retired, and left the gentlemen together.

"Pray, my lord," said Sir Francis, after a little hesitation—"do you think—I confess it is an odd question—do you think there will be any impropriety in my keeping the meeting of Cambrian archers, as I at first intended, with your permission, in St. Siffred's park?—I rather think, as it is an *annual* thing, and not a festival accidentally appointed, that there can be no objection—as in the latter case I should certainly postpone it."

"You must excuse me, Sir Francis: I am not a proper person to appeal to. Naturally wishing, as I do, to pay every respect to the memory of Sir Roger

L'Esterling

L'Esterling and his family, I may perhaps be over scrupulous: but, at all events, the park is at your service, and, I need not add, every accommodation of the Castle."

Sir Francis made his polite tenant, who hitherto had lived rent-free, many acknowledgments for his offers of service and accommodation; who having again repeated them, took his leave: at the same time Sir Francis redoubled his thanks, assuring Lord Carloville he would at some future time avail himself of the liberty allowed him.

C H A P. XLV.

Ce n'est donc pas assez que ce funeste jour
 A tous ce que j'aimois m'arrache sans retour ;
 Et que, de mon devoir esclave infortunée,
 A d'éternels ennuis je me voye enchaînée ?

RACINE.

FOR another month every thing went on in its usual train at the different mansions in the neighbourhood. At Casino Belvedere every spare barn was filled with various artificers working under Sir Francis L'Esterling's directions. He was exhausting his brains to invent something so new, that his shooting-match should surpass all those that had preceded it ; whilst Lady Mariamne agreeably stimulated him to an exertion of his abilities, by reprobating every project about which he consulted her.

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At St. Siffrid's the same riotous party continued its revels; and Fitz-Piers, who had made many good resolutions in his life and broken them all, was returned to spend the autumn with Lord Carlovile; so that the circle was again complete.

At Strathener the family was enlarged, but not much enlivened, by the arrival of Lord and Lady Caerleon, whose stock of careless dullness and insipidity was sometimes interrupted by a sarcastic observation of one spitefully returned by the other. Lord Caerleon particularly seemed much altered: he was grown more thoughtful and grave, and scarcely any traces of his former foppery remained. With people of judgment, such a change would have been called a reformation: but Lady Caerleon complained that he was grown stupid, and, with some jealousy and more folly, insinuated that it was his

sorrow for the death of Mrs. Carloville; of whose disappearance, which was still a mystery to the world, she had always entertained surmises to his lordship's prejudice. In reality, the supposed death of Mrs. Carloville had greatly contributed to this striking change in Lord Caerleon's deportment, and entirely occasioned his gravity and depression of spirits.

It was not till the arrival of her brother and sister, that Mr. Conway thought he could venture to leave Lady Octavia. He knew Lord Caerleon's aversion to her marrying the Count de Clerac-Auxerre was nearly as great as his own: having therefore cautioned him of the Count's being at St. Siffrid's, he mounted his horse and took the road to Frampton.

Conway, as usual, was perambulating the country. Trying in the fatigue of exercise to forget his torments, and to relieve

Heve an intolerable restlessness which would not suffer him to be still; he had wandered more than five miles from Frampton, and would probably have continued walking till night, had he not encountered Mr. Conway; who no sooner perceived him than he dismounted, and, leaving his horse to a servant, joined his son on foot. Mr. Conway was not less anxious to begin a conversation with him, than Conway was to avoid one. He spoke continually on indifferent subjects, but found it impossible to draw him into discourse—the longest of his answers scarcely amounting to two words, though they betrayed no signs of impatience, fretfulness, or despondency.

Mr. Conway, who saw no alteration in his person, but rather imagined, from the glow which exercise and the sun had raised upon his cheek, his health was mended, as were, he concluded from

Mrs. Conway's accounts, his spirits, was at a loss to interpret this more than common taciturnity. To puzzle Mr. Conway, was to enrage him: he began to think Conway had some motive for refusing to converse with him: he immediately pursued the same plan: they both walked on at a quick pace, and performed the last four miles of their walk in total silence.

When they reached the Lodge, Mr. Conway found himself so tired with his journey, his anger, and his long walk, that he had no inclination to contend or argue with his son; particularly in his present humour for uttering none but monosyllables. Therefore, after a short conference with Mrs. Conway and Dr. Felton, from which he received some satisfaction, he retired to bed, intending to open his negotiations with Conway in the morning.

Accordingly, the next morning afford-
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ed him an opportunity of discoursing with his son alone. Mrs. Conway had left the breakfast-room, and with his favourite study the Doctor had retired to another; when Conway, starting up at the sight of a large spaniel that always accompanied him, was preparing to begin his rambles.

"I must detain you half an hour, Harry," said Mr. Conway.

Conway threw down his hat, and returned.

"Henry!"—said Mr. Conway, pausing and hesitating—"Henry—do you remember our last conversation?"

"No," said Conway.

"If I thought you would now oppose me, I would not resume it; but surely now, when you *can* have no plea but opposition to my will and your mother's—now that Octavia and your uncle, and in short the whole family, are anxious for the connexion, you cannot be

so headstrong as to resist their united wishes?—You do not answer me, Conway. Is your silence a token of contempt, or refusal, or acquiescence?”

“Neither,” said Conway calmly. “I was trying to comprehend what you have been saying to me—I confuse myself the more when I attempt to think—it is a faculty I no longer wish to possess—but did you mention my mother? Does my mother join in wishing me to marry Octavia?”

“Yes,” exclaimed Mr. Conway, rejoiced at the coolness and patience of his manner; “I am persuaded your mother will feel infinite satisfaction in your compliance.”

“And will my acquiescence be a gratification to you, sir, that you cannot dispense with?”

“I cannot express to you,” said Mr. Conway, “how much joy it would give me!—It has long been the sole object
and

and end of all my wishes; it would make me happy—Yes, I am persuaded it would make me happy!”

“We must then come to an explanation,” said Conway, solemnly; “it is necessary for all our sakes that we come to an agreement. First, I would premise, it is not my own choice, but yours, that I comply with; and next, that this compliance absolve me and my memory from all future reproaches, from all obedience, from all duty.”

“I scarcely comprehend you, Conway. I do not see how reproach can possibly follow; and as for duty, this is the last instance in which I expect or ask it.”

“Now then let me speak, but let it be for the last time on this subject. I consent, I give my promise, to marry Octavia Conway.—But if I have any warning *here*,” putting his hand on his heart—“it will be the last act of

which I shall repent in this world—
Hereafter——”

“You are too serious, my dear Harry,” said Mr. Conway—“I accept your promise, and I answer for the consequences. Now let me thank you——”

“Stop, stop, sir!” cried Conway, precipitately snatching up his hat, “do not thank me—you will remember it with horror.”—He left the room as he was speaking; Mr. Conway called aloud after him, “Conway! one word more!”

He stood a moment.

“Will it be of any material difference to you how soon this affair is concluded?”

“I care not how how soon,” replied he: “henceforth, to-day, and to-morrow, and all days will be alike to me.” Conway darted through the hall: his faithful and affectionate Mæra followed him, and both were presently hidden in the thicket at the end of the lawn.

Conway

Conway had no sooner regained his favourite solitude, than, throwing himself on the ground, he ran over in his mind the promise he had just made to his father. It was the first shadow of consolation his distracted mind had received: hitherto he thought his duty, and the affection he owed his parents, required some exertion; but now that both joined to distress him, by urging him to what he was so averse, in a manner so unfeeling and tyrannical, he looked upon himself as no longer accountable for their happiness, since they placed it in an act which they knew would aggravate his misery. It was thus he eagerly grasped at a pretence for giving up himself to a despairing gloominess, which he was conscious it was criminal not to resist.

Having obtained his son's promise, Mr. Conway cared not how soon he returned to Strathener. It was with equal surprise

surprise Mrs. Conway heard from him the purport, and the success of his conversation ; but as the event had justified the measure, she dared not blame the ill-timed precipitancy with which Mr. Conway talked of concluding the marriage. As for the woman he had chosen, though she had long ceased to object to her, her sentiments with respect to her manners, her temper, and principles were unalterably the same. After the departure of Mr. Conway, she ruminated incessantly on the strange turn Conway's temper had so suddenly taken ; it appeared too extraordinary to be true ; it puzzled and alarmed her : but having been entreated by Mr. Conway not to lead to any conversation on the subject with her son, she refrained from questioning him, though she was unable to penetrate the meaning of his request.

At his return to Strathener, Mr. Conway delayed not to inform Lord Tre-
castle

castle of his visit, and partly of the illness that had so long detained Conway at Frampton Lodge, unknown to his mother and the family at Strathener. He gave favourable accounts of the improving state of his health, and failed not to add, he felt an extreme impatience to come to Strathener; where he hoped to find every preliminary towards his marriage settled, and even the day fixed; though his physician remonstrated against leaving Frampton till his health was perfectly re-established. Mr. Conway thought it necessary to account for Conway's remaining at Frampton, when so many interesting circumstances concurred to make his appearance at Strathener almost indispensable.

Lord Treastle, who admired his nephew, had always listened with pleasure to Mr. Conway's proposal of marrying him and Octavia: he was particularly well pleased with the renewal of them,
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at a time when the recent refusal he had given to the Count de Clerac-Auxerre, made him strongly suspect that his daughter still resented it; and lest anger should become downright rebellion, he eagerly concurred with his brother in the expediency of a speedy marriage; very plausibly concluding, when once Octavia was married to her cousin, not all the foreign Counts in Europe would have it in their power to pester him with broken English, or run away with his daughter against his consent. Mr. Conway now informed Lord Trecastle of Lady Octavia's previous consent; and, leaving it to his lordship to fix the day with his daughter, contented himself with remarking, he hoped Lady Octavia would not attempt to postpone it beyond a fortnight.

The intended marriage, by the preparations that were making, was soon known and openly talked of in the family.

mily. Lady Octavia, with all possible coolness, gave herself the airs of a looker-on : whenever she was applied to for directions—"Just as you please—It is of no kind of consequence—Perfectly indifferent—" were her answers. Dis-simulating as she was, she would not however have seen these preparations with so much pretended calmness, had not her uncle's short absence given her an opportunity of concerting measures with the Count de Clerac, which were to effect a counter-revolution.

The Count appeared excessively hurt and mortified at the promise she had made to Mr. Conway ; protested, she meant to desert him ;—that nothing should make him resign such a treasure as Octavia ;—that he would rush into the church and carry her off, in spite of Conway and her whole family."

Lady Octavia entreated him to be calm, promised to make her escape in
the

the night, or throw herself from the windows—or come down a rope-ladder, provided he would procure one. The Count was in too much despair to believe her.

“How incredulous you are!” she exclaimed; “I promise to forfeit to you half my fortune, if I do not marry you.”

“Ah, ma belle amie!—What consolation will half your fortune be to me?”

“It will convince you at least of the sincerity of my promises,” said Octavia.

She then wrote a promissory note for twenty thousand pounds, which she signed, and put into the Count's hand:

“You see I am in earnest,” added she;

“and when I have told you the remainder of my plan, I am sure you will applaud it. I will contrive to let you know the day; and instead of being married at Strathener, I will insist on going to church, and by that means give you

an

an opportunity of forbidding the marriage. I will easily make it appear that Conway has caused the interruption; the confusion will consequently be very great, and I shall avail myself of it to join you at an appointed place." —

The Count applauded the scheme highly. Indeed, it carried with it an appearance of success that seemed to restore his spirits and confidence to their usual pitch; and Octavia, perfectly at ease as to the event, cared not how soon her uncle exposed himself to the disappointment. ~~He had not undeservedly prepared for him.~~

C H A P. XLVI.

—Vel quis non vidit vulnere pali,
Quem cavat assiduis sudibus, scutoque laceffit?

JUVENAL.

THOUGH Sir Francis L'Esterling made a feint of postponing the annual shooting match, nothing was further from his intentions than to do so in reality. And perfectly satisfied with the compliment he had paid Lord Carville in mentioning such an intention, he continued his preparations for the day originally fixed upon. Accordingly great numbers of people of fashion, as well those who belonged to the society as those who did not, allured by the fineness of the day, and the well-known fanciful splendour of Sir Francis L'Esterling's

sterling's fêtes, assembled in the park at St. Siffrid's, to amuse themselves by looking on, by betting on the candidates for the prizes, or by joining in the evening dance upon the turf. Amongst them were Lord and Lady Caerleon, and Lady Octavia Conway; neither of whom took any part in the amusements: but Lady Mariamne particularly distinguished herself, by carrying away all the fame and the prizes from the other Amazonian ladies on the field.

The next day was that fixed on for the marriage of Conway with his cousin; and Lord Caerleon, whose manners towards the Count were studiously forbidding, had in all appearance so far succeeded as to discourage, during the amusements of the morning, every attention on his part to Lady Octavia, who bore her brother's tyranny with the most exemplary resignation, having very adroitly slipped a billet into her lover's hand,

hand, in which his part in the intended drama was clearly marked.

But Lord Caerleon had still more cogent reasons for being present at this new display of Sir Francis's ill-timed magnificence, with which he was much displeased, than merely watching his sister Octavia, whose conduct, though trifling and silly, he had never suspected. It was the more flagrant misbehaviour which the world now in loud rumours imputed to Lady Mariamne L'Esterling that had brought him into Wales; and though the scandal was so cautiously whispered in the neighbourhood of Strathener and Kilgaren, that neither Sir Francis nor Lord Treastle was as yet alarmed; it had spread into Somersetshire, where Lord Caerleon and his lady were on a visit at Orchard Sedgmoor, a seat of Lord Beralston's.

Like most men of light morals, Caerleon was particularly jealous of the female

male honour of his own family: and though half frantic at the possibility of finding these reports to the prejudice of Lady Mariamne true; yet he had the prudence not to mention even to Lady Caerleon his reasons for so suddenly quitting Orchard Sedginoor, determined at the same time to make an example of Carloville, though at the hazard of his life. A very few days spent in making observations at the different meetings in the neighbourhood, preposessed as he was, served to convince him that Lady Mariamne's intimacy with Lord Carloville was considered as injurious to her. But as yet he half flattered himself these were only the malignant insinuations of ill-nature, owing to the former situation of Carloville in the family; though he plainly saw with extreme indignation, that instead of avoiding all connexion with him, as the family at Strathener had done, he was by
far

far the most intimate and familiar visitor at Casino Belvedere; and not more exasperated at his sister's conduct than at Sir Francis's foolish security and blindness, he redoubled his vigilance, determining with equal rage and firmness that neither of the offenders, if such they were, should escape his vengeance. No other consideration could have induced him to be present at the shooting-match; and though much circumspection was necessary, he could scarcely refrain from mortifying Sir Francis, by expressing his abhorrence of the indecorum of making a public entertainment so soon after the death of a near relation, for whom he was in his first mourning.

Poor Sir Francis, doomed by his folly to eternal mortifications, had observed the sulky gloominess of Lord Caerleon's countenance, and the coldness of his manner whenever he addressed him. And indeed, from having always been

treated by Lord Treecastle as the first personage in his family, there was something very formidable in Lord Caerleon's anger to every part of it immediately within his sway, which even extended to Sir Francis, who was thrown into the greatest perplexity at his constrained short answers, and at his keeping himself with his party separate from the rest of the company.

At dinner, however, Sir Francis hoped to overcome his ill humour; and from the projected elegance of the ball, he thought he had ensured his admiration, even to a certainty. Round the largest oak in the park was placed a circular table. The branches were decorated with wreaths and garlands of flowers; and opposite to a trophy of the quiver, bow, and silver crescent, which she had that day gained, sat Lady Marianne, and next her, at her express desire, Lord Carville.

The table was nearly full, before Sir Francis discovered that Lord Caerleon had not taken a place. Neither Lady Mariamne's loud invitation, nor the significant smiles of the observing crowd at seeing Carlovile place himself at her elbow, had escaped him, as he stood watching them at a little distance: his eyes glittering with passion through his black eyelashes, partly expressed the desire of revenge that glowed in his heart.

Sir Francis, advancing towards Lady Caerleon, took her hand, and was leading her to a vacant part of the table; but Caerleon, instantly snatching the other, exclaimed in a tone that reached the ears of many of the company, "No part of *my* family, Sir Francis, over whom I have any authority, shall be seen in the society of that man;" looking, or rather staring fiercely, at Carlovile.

Sir Francis too stared; but it was with astonishment at every one round him, in order

order to discover the ineligible person. In return, the whole group exhibited the most perplexing variety of different expressions of countenance; amongst which many seemed to pronounce Lady Mariamne's confusion and change of colour, tokens of guilt—and Carlovill's undaunted gaiety, a perfect model of assumed, unconscious effrontery. In the mean time, Caerleon's sociable had driven up; so that, when Sir Francis was on the point of begging him to be more explicit, he made him a half inclination of the head, and immediately drove off towards Strathener.

This most untoward caprice of Caerleon, however, operated so effectually on Sir Francis, as to destroy all the delight he had promised himself in the festival, projected with so much labour and at so great an expence. He was particularly mortified that Caerleon should appear so much irritated without any

apparent reason: but he was still more grieved that he would not hear the dirge of the Three famous Archers, which he had written and set for the occasion; and which was to be sung during dinner by three voices, in the hollow of the oak round which they dined; a thought for which he had given himself much credit, as quite new and extraordinary, and likely to produce a surprising effect. The intended decorations for the ball, too, had given him equal pleasure in idea. But unable to account for Caerleon's expressions of disapprobation and disgust, he could think of nothing else; and before the company prepared for the dance, he had framed a thousand ridiculous excuses of sudden indisposition, nerves, and palpitations, in order to escape to Strathener, and hear at large what had so entirely discomposed him.

But scarcely was the sky-coloured awning erected amongst the trees, and
the

the lamps arranged, when Lord Caerleon made his re-appearance, alone, though palpably not better inclined to be pleased than when he so pointedly quitted the party at dinner. Lady Mariamne with Carlovile for her partner was just leading down the dance. Caerleon advanced as nearly opposite to the latter as the dancers would permit, and continued to follow him with a steady scornful stare, not unnoticed by his sister, though Carlovile gave not the least intimation of perceiving the intended offence. But, in all probability, Caerleon would not have desisted till he had imprudently forced Carlovile to take umbrage at his behaviour, had not his attention been taken off from watching him, by hearing the names of Sir Francis and Lady Mariamne repeatedly echoed, by a party of men who with mirth stood watching the dancers.

“C'est une femme!” said De Clerac,

lowering his voice to a whisper. "She is an imperious, insolent woman," said Sir Dennis Castlebar: "But she is in good hands; Carloville is up to taming proud spirits," he added.

"I wish," said Fitz-Piers, "all the disgrace he is preparing for Sir Francis may recoil on his own head! I have sworn a hundred times that I would make an acquaintance with Sir Francis, merely to prevail on him to forbid Carloville his house."

"I protest I do not know which of the three is most of a fool!" said Castlebar, addressing Fitz-Piers. "But here comes Sir Francis. Sir Francis L'Esterling, Mr. Fitz-Piers desires to be introduced to you—a cousin of Lord Carloville."

Sir Francis politely assured him of his very great esteem for Lord Carloville and every part of his family, and entreated to have the pleasure of seeing
Mr.

Mr. Fitz-Piers at Casino Belvedere. He was on the point of adding, that Lady Marianne herself should repeat the invitation, when, perceiving Lord Caerleon, he instantly advanced towards him, and expressed as much joy at seeing him returned, as if he had been on some perilous expedition from which he was scarcely expected to come back alive.

“Do, my Lord, take the trouble to advance ten steps with me, and I will show you the most striking perspective of the dancers you can possibly imagine!” said Sir Francis, mistaking Lord Caerleon’s invincible coldness for silent admiration. “There!” continued he exultingly, “what idea does all this present to your mind? You will confess this blue canopy, in appearance supported only by these balloon figures representing the Winds, is a light airy thought? Look at Eurus and Auster; do they not remind you of those figures on the Tower

of the Winds at Athens? They were made under my directions, from drawings of my taking. Those are Vests carrying lamps; Cupids and Hymens with lighted torches; they float over the dancers from the air they make in moving; they have the lightness and effect I expected. But listen a moment to the music; does it seem in the air, or underground? You do not guess. Well then, the musicians are disposed of in each of those trees, which in reality support the four corners of the canopy. I wish you would tell me, if you could have suggested any improvement."

"I!" exclaimed Caerleon, his eyes still fixed on Carlovill and his sister. "Yes, I wish you would procure Lady Mariamne some other partner."

"Oh! She always chooses for herself; but I will introduce Mr. Fitz-Piers presently. But do not these decorations give you any particular idea? I myself think

think that nothing is wanting but the river Peneus, to make it a perfect representation of the Theſſalian Tempe." Sir Francis was about to apply to Caerleon again for his opinion: but he, disgusted with ſuch trifling folly, had unceremoniouſly left him, and reſumed his ſtation as near his ſiſter as he could: and Sir Francis, perceiving his neareſt auditors were his friends Eurys and Auſter, provided himſelf with a partner, and took his place in the dance not far from Lady Mariamne.

Lord Caerleon's unremitted watching had not been loſt upon her, and in his looks, diſpleaſed and angry, ſhe perceived ſome mortification was preparing for her, which her conſcience told her ſhe deſerved. When Sir Francis ſtood up, ſhe was glad of a pretence for diſengaging herſelf from her partner, becauſe Carloveſſe, to whom ſhe was fearful of hinting Caerleon's palpable diſ-

like, grew still more assiduous in his attentions. She therefore, in approaching Sir Francis, very dexterously contrived to entangle some part of her dress in the buttons of his coat, and then, laying all the blame on his awkwardness, declined dancing any more; saying, as she left the set, "Sir Francis's manner of dancing was so very *hostile*, that she could not run the risk of encountering him again." She then took a seat next her brother, and, notwithstanding his repelling manners, entered into conversation with him upon indifferent subjects all the remainder of the evening; whilst he, debating whether he should represent to her, or to Sir Francis, the necessity of giving up Carlovill's acquaintance, was in hopes and half inclined to believe that he was the more blameable of the two in not perceiving the strong impropriety, and even the impeachment he must have drawn upon his credit in the opinions
of

of all men of honour, by continuing to notice a man who had formerly behaved in so flagrant a manner to his relation.

The company prepared to separate before Lord Caerleon came to any resolution; and having left Lady Mariamne with Sir Francis, he returned to Strathener, partly determined his father's command should sanction the authority that was to expel Carloville from his sister's society.

C H A P. XLVII.

— Let none admire
That riches grow in hell ; that soil may best
Deserve the precious bane.

MILTON.

NOTWITHSTANDING his manner of bearing it, Caerleon's observations had not escaped Lord Carlovill's notice. He perceived his schemes were drawing to a crisis, which in some measure was hastened by the scrutinising watchfulness of Caerleon, though meant to have a contrary effect. Carlovill saw that, to succeed in his plans, not the smallest delay was allowed him ; that he must seize the present moment, and that even another day might derange them beyond all possibility of retrieval.

Covetous,

Covetous, profligate, and unprincipled, he had always beheld with an eye of envy the large estate of Sir Francis L'Esterling; part of which he once looked upon as his own. He knew too, that provided Sir Francis died without heirs it reverted to Sir Roger L'Esterling's female descendants. When first Sir Francis married Lady Mariamne Conway, there appeared no probable chance of his ever possessing any part of it; But as yet they had no family. Not only report but observation pronounced them unhappy; and upon a nearer intimacy with the family, Carloville perceived he might turn their discord, and the reviving partiality of Lady Mariamne, to his own advantage. He had every reason to believe he could prevail on the lady to desert Sir Francis in hopes of his marrying her himself. It was in order to favour more effectually this infatuation, and give the colour of possibility

possibility to the performance of his promise, that he spared no trouble to convince her of the death of Ethelreda. Having in his own mind, therefore, effectually separated them, it was by no means his intention to go farther than promises. The Conway family, he did not doubt, would make every exertion to prevent a divorce; and he thought himself sure that Sir Francis would be governed by them in every thing, except taking back his plague when he had once fairly got rid of her. It was then his intention to discover Ethelreda, whom he suspected of having taken refuge with the Harwoods; to secure her person, and keep her concealed till the death of Sir Francis—which event his lawless visions placed at no great distance, from the apparent delicacy of his constitution. Then would be the moment to produce to the world the unfortunate daughter of Sir Roger L'Es-
terling,

terling, and in her right, as co-heiress with her sister, to take possession of half the estate. About the present belief of her death he gave himself no trouble, as his conduct would easily make that pass for a stratagem of her own.

It is difficult to pronounce, whether folly or wickedness were most predominant in these infamous plans; but hitherto Carlovile had been successful in all his villanies, and encouraged to proceed by the most ensnaring and blind security. Fearing no laws but penal ones; without any remains of honour, or sentiment of remorse; equally dead to conscience as he was unfeeling; and a prey to the most insatiable rapacity; he looked forward to the accomplishment of every wish, without the shadow of a scruple at trampling on all order, and dissolving the most sacred ties of society. Thus abandoned by all sense of decency and virtue, he required but little consideration

sideration to resolve on the most atrocious measures. It appeared to him the most eligible plan he could adopt, to prevail on Lady Mariamne to elope with him before morning; and in order more effectually to execute his purpose, he intended to propose to Sir Francis and her Ladyship, taking up their abode that night at the Castle.

Sir Francis peremptorily declined accepting the invitation; for which Carloville was prepared, as Sir Francis's aversion was extremely well known to him. But Lady Mariamne, who had more than half acquiesced in all his plans, as peremptorily declared it was an accommodation she could by no means forego; pretending she was so much fatigued with dancing, and the numerous robust exercises of the day, that to ride twenty miles before she reposed would endanger her life. Nor would she hear of going to Strathener, though no objection

jection could be made to its distance. Nothing that Sir Francis could say ever had any weight with Lady Mariamne; nor could he have stimulated her to stay more certainly, than by entreating her not to do it. She openly scoffed at his pretending to judge of the impropriety of the action, and obstinately persisted in not going further than St. Siffred's.

On the other hand, Carloville represented that nothing could be more absurd than returning to Casino Belvedere; that several ladies were to honour him by taking beds that night at the Castle; that every accommodation it afforded, had been prepared for the reception of his expected guests; and the best apartment on the south side had been particularly allotted for the use of Sir Francis and Lady Mariamne.

This was in reality the case: for Carloville would not have been much distressed if his guests had descended
through

through the flooring, and by that means spared him the trouble of going through with his plans ; though, to say the truth, he had not the remotest idea of such a catastrophe. But Sir Francis, at the bare mention of the fourth apartments, exclaimed in horror, he would not sleep there for the universe ; and protesting Lady Mariamne was her own mistress, he staid only till he had conducted her, accompanied by Carloville, to the Castle gates ; and departed alone, troubled at her obstinacy and unpliant temper, and perplexed at the construction he was conscious the Strathener family would put on *his* conduct as well as hers.

CHAP.

C H A P. XLVIII.

If spirits can assume both form and suit,
You come to fright us.

SHAKESPEARE.

WHILST the appearance of festivity and rejoicing once more diffused itself over the Castle domain, the supposed unexisting, and, by the gay crowd, almost forgotten Ethelreda, sat musing in her solitary prison. She had kept no register of the time of her confinement, and could almost have fancied that years had rolled over her head, and that she, grown old within its walls, was no longer interested in any thing that passed beyond them. But it was an idea she did not like to indulge; for insensibly it led to the recollection of those

those friends whom she so tenderly loved. It was impossible to think of the world she had quitted for ever, without remembering her sister and Conway; and, whilst she was trying to forget them, and return to the calculation she had been making of the number of the days of her confinement, the sound of music stole upon her ear like the "sweet south." There was something ærial in the sound that at once diverted her attention from herself; it seemed "about, above, and underneath." At intervals, the soft rustling of the trees which grew in the deep vale below the tower, and the murmuring of the retreating tide upon the pebbles, interrupted yet improved the melody. Lost in pensive admiration at such an assemblage of sweet yet wild and solemn sounds, which brought all the traditional stories of the exquisite bards of her native mountains to her memory,

she

she arose, and, taking the lamp, walked through the long passages to her father's apartment.

Ethelreda stood a few moments to contemplate her father's portrait, and, wiping the tears from her eyes, passed on through the gallery to the little turret. Here she left her lamp, and began to ramble amongst the battlements, to admire the beauty of the night, the soft freshness of the air, and the sound of the music that still continued to vibrate, though less distinctly, on her ear; when, turning towards the park, she was at once astonished at the glimmering of numberless lights amongst the trees, and the almost undistinguishable noise of voices.

For a moment it occurred to Ethelreda that Conway might be there. She turned away disgusted at the thought, and sickening at the sound of revelry; then, straining her eyes as if possible

to

to see him, she continued gazing on the lights, lost in a thousand perplexing ideas, and heedless of the lapse of time, till she was roused from her reverie into terror and distress at hearing the near approach of voices in the courts of the Castle; by which she concluded the family was not yet retired, and that she had perhaps exposed herself to the chance of being discovered. The excess of her terror almost took away her senses; when she heard distinctly the opening and shutting of the gates, and almost believed she could distinguish footsteps traversing the apartments through which she had already passed, and must return. The day began to dawn, whilst Ethelreda, anxiously listening in agonies of fear and irresolution, was debating whether it was safe to return; till observing the glow of the morning, and apprehending that some early labourer would see the fluttering of her
white

white garments over the battlements, and alarm the family, timidly returned to the little turret, where her lamp was still lighted, but burning pale and feebly at the return of the morning light. She walked cautiously through the gallery and her father's apartment, and had almost gained the furthest door, when she heard one fall together behind her, and the echo of footsteps as of people hastily following. The power of moving was denied her; her feet seemed rooted to the ground; and though she might immediately have concealed herself by lifting up the hanging that covered the private door leading into the library, so entirely were her senses suspended at the danger that threatened her, that she waited till the door opened and presented to her dismayed sight the forms of two persons, though the distraction of her mind prevented her from recognizing the persons of Carloville and Lady

dy Mariamne L'Esterling ! By an involuntary emotion, Ethelreda instantly lifted the lamp to her face : the sickly blue flame added a tint to the horrors her features expressed. Lady Mariamne immediately knew the shade of her rival : she neither shrieked nor fainted, but fell on her knees with every expression of supplicating guilt.

Carloville too, the hardened and unfeeling Carloville, for a moment forgot the story of her death was of his own raising ; and whilst his eyes were fixed on her motionless countenance, and in a voice scarcely human he was trying to articulate a prayer for forgiveness, the flame died away, and involved the phantom in obscurity.

"She's gone !"—exclaimed the terrified Mariamne, falling on her face upon the floor.

"She shall not escape me !" cried Carloville, rushing towards the door :

the thought instantly recurring to him that Ethelreda's was not a preternatural appearance.

The exclamation roused Ethelreda from the torpor that had seized her; she availed herself of the concealed door, and precipitately retreated as silently as if she had really been one of those visionary forms that are supposed to glide about in assumed shapes, or dissolve into air at their pleasure.

Carloville had placed himself at one door, expecting the supposed ghost would attempt to escape at the other exactly opposite to it, of which its hoarse rusty hinges, which had made sufficient noise on his entering, would give him notice. He waited a few moments—the deadness of the silence alarmed even him—he called to Lady Marianne; for as yet the twilight was so obscure, owing to the dimness of the painted windows and their incumbered form, that

the opposite side of the room was not discernible. She returned no answer; for her terrors became so powerful at seeing the ghost actually vanish, that she fainted.

Carloville, alarmed at her continuing insensible, and in fear lest such delays should overturn his schemes, which he had by no means relinquished, was at a loss how to proceed. He was now certain Ethelreda was still in the Castle: but, perceiving she had once more escaped him by some incomprehensible means, he knew not what obstacles she might have the power of raising to the detriment of his plans; or whether it would be more expedient to raise an outcry and secure her person, or, by suffering the illusion of her death still to pass upon the world, take his chance for once more getting her into his power whenever his plot should require her re-appearance. After some short debates

bates in his own mind (for the exigency of the case would admit of no other), and perceiving that, by delaying the execution of his preconcerted intention, he ran the most imminent hazard of irretrievably ruining himself with the Strathener family, by means of Lord Caerleon (who would, from this last imprudence of Lady Mariamne, conclude all his suspicions well founded, and take precautions to prevent any future intercourse between himself and the L'Esterlings), he finally decided in favour of his original scheme.

In a bye-road not many paces from the Castle, according to his appointment, waited a hired chaise, in which he placed Lady Mariamne not yet recovered from her fainting—not a little alarmed lest, when her senses returned, she should remember the ghost, and in a fit of contrition refuse to proceed in their journey. The motion of the

carriage very soon revived the conscience-stricken lady. At first Carloville tried to laugh her out of so absurd an idea as that of having seen an apparition, and to persuade her that she was still under the impression of some terrifying dream. But she was too firmly convinced of the contrary to believe the phantom she had seen was raised by her own imagination; by turns screaming with terror at the frightful remembrance, and entreating to be suffered to return.

"I protest," cried Carloville, alarmed at her eagerness and the excess of her terror, "I swear you shall not return under this fantastic impression that has taken such strong possession of your mind: it will be a sufficient plea for your family, should they be so inclined, to confine you, and say you are deranged."

"Deranged!" repeated Lady Mari-
anne:

amne: "As surely as I live, I saw her—pale, and standing motionless in her shroud!"

"Well, well! I hope to convince you very soon that what you say is utterly impossible."

Again Lady Mariamne urged the strong conviction of her senses, and sometimes in a supplicating, sometimes in a haughty tone, insisted upon returning; whilst Carlovile, representing every possible disadvantage under which she would return to her family, and the undoubted vengeance of Lord Caerleon, tried every means of raising her spirits by the most fervent assurances of unalterable attachment, and a repetition of all his former promises; at the same time redoubling his charges, and raising the rewards of his postillions at every stage.

C H A P. XLIX.

Non bisogna la morte,
 Ch'a stringer nobil core,
 Prima basta la fede; e poi l'amore.

TASSO.

THE night on which Sir Francis had given his entertainment, Conway and his mother arrived at Strathener from Frampton Lodge. The next day was that fixed on for his marriage with his cousin Octavia, who received him with a tolerable degree of civility, and suffered his inattentive and absent behaviour to pass without any spiteful comments; which in some measure caused his strange and altered manners to escape the particular observation of the rest of the family. But, indisposed for society, Conway made no apology for

his

his silence ; nor did he wait till the usual hour of separation, but most unceremoniously withdrew before supper, leaving the whole party not much disposed to gaiety or late hours, and drawing strange presages from the more than indifference of his courtship.

It was Lord Treacastle's wish to be present at his daughter's marriage ; he was therefore desirous the ceremony should be performed at Strathener, because a late fit of the gout made it dangerous for him to venture as far as St. Siffrid's, the parish church. This intention of her father's Octavia however had foreseen ; and knowing her acquiescence would effectually counteract her own plans, she suffered the error to continue till the very day, and then peremptorily refused to be married any where but at St. Siffrid's. Lord Treacastle stormed as usual, but gave way to his daughter's caprice, and deputed

Lord Caerleon to supply his place; whilst he dispatched a note to Casino Belvedere, in order to apprise Sir Francis and Lady Mariamne, who had been previously invited to be present by Lady Octavia herself. It was late in the morning before the disputed point could be settled, and Conway, to the wonder of part of the family, had not made his appearance.

The absence of a person so materially interested did not fail to produce an effect upon the temper of Lord Treastle; Caerleon looked sneeringly from time to time at his uncle, whose mind was far from being the most composed; and even the bride's nonchalance seemed to give way to such extraordinary treatment—when at past eleven o'clock Conway, followed by his dog, walked into the room; that moment returned from a ramble which had lasted since sunrise.

The negligence of his air and manner
could

could not fail to strike Caerleon with astonishment: he eyed him from head to foot repeatedly; heat and exercise had raised a glow on his cheeks that partly disguised the ravages of fever; and concluding, though nothing could be more foreign to his character, that his indifference was impertinent affectation, he scarcely knew how to refrain from uttering the most cutting sarcasms. Mr. Conway at last ventured to ask, why he had kept them waiting? adding, he was fearful no apologies would be a sufficient atonement to Lady Octavia.

Conway's agitation would scarcely permit him to speak. He endeavoured to stammer out, that he was ready to attend her ladyship; and Octavia, who had been in a thousand fears for the event, suppressed her resentment, and suffered him to lead her to the carriage. Lady Caerleon and her Lord followed, at a loss to conclude what motives could pre-

wail on Octavia to subdue the turbulent spirit that more than once had been on the point of breaking out into reproaches and rage. The ride was but a short one; during which Conway seemed so far to have recovered his composure as to be able to speak once or twice on their way. Octavia, on the contrary, preserved a dead silence; and Caerleon, whose anger still boiled in his heart, could not prevail on himself to answer; nor did Lady Caerleon choose to take the trouble.

But when they reached the church, when Conway saw himself a second time at the altar, all the events of his unfortunate life rushed before him; and when he gave his hand to Octavia, a cold tremor shook his whole frame, the drops stood on his face, and he seemed to endure the agonies of the dying. Octavia herself was scarcely less agitated: notwithstanding the solemnity of the service, she anxiously turned her head from time

to

to time towards the door, as if in expectation of seeing some one enter: her alarm increased as the ceremony drew towards the conclusion; and when the clergyman closed the book, and she perceived she was actually married, the colour forsook her cheeks, and she fell back into the arms of Caerleon, who stood next her. He at first could not believe she had really fainted, so much was he surprised: water and salts were presently produced, but without effect; and Lady Caerleon, observing it was impossible for any one to be well in a dismal damp church, desired she might be taken into the air. Accordingly, with the assistance of some of the people around her (for Conway attempted not to offer his), she was carried to the coach, where a few hysterical screams and many tears proclaimed her recovery.

Conway, whose faculties were wholly engrossed with former scenes, never ob-

served that he was alone. He still stood on the same spot, his eyes fixed on the same objects, and his attitude motionless; when his attention was at once roused and arrested by a vision the most extraordinary, and that almost annihilated his remaining senses. The drapery that adorned the altar moved slowly—a figure with that kind of countenance and grace that we suppose angelic, advanced a step or two, and then kneeling, uttered with fervent action and the devotion of a saint a short prayer. Conway thought he heard his own name pronounced—he thought he saw features that were once known to him—he thought it was a vision, and, not in fear but rapture, passed his hand before his eyes in order to clear his sight—he looked again, and saw nothing.

It was a moment of more painful suffering than he had ever known. He was not superstitious, but he was convinced

by the most certain evidence, he had seen the shade of Ethelreda; that he had heard his own name uttered by her. In the first transports of his joy he thought she would have spoken to him—have told him to follow her; but when he perceived the phantom had melted into air, he could have reproached her ashes with cruelty, could he have found utterance: but words died upon his lips, despair and horror had seized upon him, and he fled precipitately from the scene of his marriage, which appeared to him to have raised the perturbed spirit from its last habitation.

After having waited some time in the carriage in expectation of being joined by Conway, whose conduct became still more inexplicable to Caerleon the more he considered it; in order, if possible, to alleviate Lady Octavia's grief, which rather increased than diminished; he went himself back to the church to remind
him

him of the necessity of accompanying them back to Strathener: at the same time debating with himself whether Conway's extreme negligence deserved his compassion or his resentment, he was at last inclined to believe his faculties had really suffered from his late illness: he was not therefore very much surprised, on returning to the church, to find it locked, and no one remaining of whom he could make any enquiry. He now fancied he could perfectly remember something very unusual in Conway's manner; and seriously alarmed lest some extravagant action should follow the eccentricities he had observed, he hastened back to Strathener, intending to leave the ladies there, and set out in search of his cousin, provided he had not returned alone. Owing to the various delays that had occurred in the events of the morning, it was late when they returned to the Castle, where a new scene
of

of confusion had arisen, which entirely banished all thoughts of Octavia's strange marriage from the head of Lord Treastle, and caused him to overlook Conway's equally strange absence.

The servant who was dispatched with a note to Sir Francis and Lady Marianne L'Esterling, to request to see them at Strathener, had met Sir Francis on the road, who immediately directed him to St. Siffrid's, to deliver a message to Lady Marianne, in order to apprise her of his being at Strathener, and to desire she would join him there. The messenger returned with all possible speed, and informed his master, "that Lady Marianne and their Lord," the servants of the Castle had told him, "had not been seen since the preceding evening, and they supposed her ladyship and their master were returned to Casino Belvedere to breakfast." Lord Treastle, who could make nothing of the message, applied to

Sir

Sir Francis for some explanation; which he was unable to give, because he was unwilling to own that Mariamne had slept at St. Siffred's, and that he had returned to his own house; though at the same time, notwithstanding his blindness heretofore, the actual state of the case immediately occurred to him, and he was firmly convinced, in his own mind, nothing was further from the intention of Carloville, or his wife, than to come to Casino Belvedere. He had suffered Lord Treastle, however, to dispatch another express to his house, in order to allay his impatience, which on most occasions was extremely troublesome; and by the time Caerleon made his appearance with his party, the good peer's anxiety, joined to some ill humour and much rage, had partly deprived him of the power of expressing himself, for to his son he was perfectly unintelligible. Much explanation was, however, unnecessary to make

Caerleon

Caerleon comprehend in its fullest extent what had happened, when the names of his sister and Carlovile were repeated to him. Passion and uproar give no idea of the fury of invective with which he assailed the almost passive Sir Francis; in one moment storming for his horses and fire-arms, execrating the wretch who had disgraced herself and her family, and vowing terrible vengeance against the companion of her flight.

Lord Treastle, who expected his messenger would return with satisfactory tidings, endeavoured to persuade him into patience; whilst Mr. Conway prudently prevented him, though more by main force than entreaty, from beginning his pursuit whilst there was yet a possibility of preventing the suspicions Lady Mariamne had excited from being more generally known. It grew late, however; and no news arriving, the tumult of Caerleon's passions, unused to restraint, could

no

no longer brook the suspense: he protested he would go that instant to St. Siffred's Castle to collect every circumstance; scornfully telling Sir Francis, he might follow him or not as he pleased.

Sir Francis, who was perfectly indifferent as to the fate of his lady, and wished nothing so ardently as never to see her again, had no intention to suffer in the opinion of Lord Gaerleon, who only staid to order a carriage to follow him to St. Siffred's, and haughtily walked on at so quick a pace that Sir Francis had some difficulty to keep him in sight.

CHAP. L.

O cecità delle terrene menti

In qual profonde notte,

In qual fosca caligine d'errore,

Son le nostr' alma immerse

Quando tu non le illustri, o sommo sole!

CHAP. L.

ALL day Conway wandered through the woods that surrounded the Castle: the vision still flitted before him; every moment increased the horrors that distracted him; and the state of his mind, long unsettled by contemplating his own misfortunes, wanted not the assistance of an event so extraordinary to fix him in a resolution the most fatal and decisive.

By urging him to a marriage with Octavia, so contrary to his happiness, he persuaded himself, his father and mother had

had no longer a right to depend on him for theirs. But this idea alone would not have been sufficient to destroy the remorse he felt at the sorrow and distraction he should bring upon them—had not the extraordinary apparition of Ethelreda, which he had so clearly seen, seemed to confirm him in his intentions, and raised a momentary phrensy, which left his thoughts but one object, that of following her by any means in his power.

He resolved to return to the church, from which he had wandered a considerable distance, and had in his perplexity lost himself amongst some straggling bushes, which partly covered a heath of no great extent that overlooked the sea. It was the grey of the evening; and at the time of the year when the days and nights are of an even length, the twilight does not continue long. Though Conway had traversed the same spot a hundred times, and with Ethelreda, he

had

no

no longer preserved any recollection of its situation. His impatience helped to increase his perplexity, when the barking of dogs, and the almost instant appearance of his own spaniel, made him observe the glimmering light of a cottage at some distance, which had escaped his observation. Without noticing the caresses of the overjoyed animal, Conway walked towards the light with extreme haste, expecting to be directed towards St. Siffrid's.

A woman approached the window with a rush candle. "St. Siffrid's, sir?" said she, pointing towards some distant light: "You are not a quarter of a mile from the village." The woman looked stedfastly at him whilst she spoke; "You are Mr. Conway!"—she exclaimed, with extreme surprise: "Ah, sir! the last time I saw you—" the poor woman could not help weeping at the recollection, and Conway himself now forcibly

forcibly remembered the last time he had seen her was with Ethelfreda, who had taken her under her protection, and that often in her name he had himself given her money.

"She employs me for the last time," said Conway, taking out his purse, his watch, and pocket-book, and giving them through the casement. The woman retreated in amazement, and would have returned them; but Conway darted over the heath with so much rapidity, that in a moment she lost sight of him.

He continued his way with equal speed, till he came near the Castle. At a little distance from the outer gate waited Lord Caerleon's carriage, and some of his and Sir Francis's servants, who were holding their horses whilst they waited for their masters. Conway approached them, and, taking a pistol from the holders, asked if they were loaded? One of the men answered that they were.

were. He put it in his pocket, and walked through the gateway to the Castle. In the inner court was assembled a large group. But neither the lights, nor the people, nor the clamorous sound of their voices, attracted Conway's attention; and all were too much engaged to observe him. The doors of the different entrances to the apartments round the court were open, as if some sudden alarm had assembled the inhabitants from every part of the Castle; and Conway, availing himself of the easiness of its access, silently followed the lights in several of the corridors till he came to those rooms the Harwoods used most constantly. The lights, however, here deserted him, and gloomy grey dusk and total silence presented themselves, instead of cheerful and the most flattering reception, which had always awaited him in his former visits at St. Siffred's.

He

He came at last to the library. As he passed, the skirts of his coat brushed against the strings of a harp, one of the unalienable appendages of the Castle. The vibration produced a momentary alarm mingled with joy upon the heart of Conway. He thought it was another intimation from the shade of Ethelred; he trembled with agony, and, though strongly determined, hung back for a moment from the fate he had prepared for himself. Again a noise behind the arras startled him. His dog, who had followed him with instinctive watchfulness, rushed forward and barked furiously. "It is Carloville!" exclaimed he; and revenge overcoming despair, he grasped the pistol which he held in his hand, and spring towards the sound with so much force and violence, as to fall through the concealed aperture, and down several of the steps. He rose however instantly, neither feeling nor know-

knowing that he had fallen, and pursued his way in total darkness, panting and breathless with impatience, but animated to proceed by hearing the sound of steps retreating before him. He continued to advance till he seemed to have left the noise behind him, which no longer appeared but as the phantom of a disturbed imagination. He stood a moment to recollect, if possible, where he was, and to listen to the sound that had deluded him; when a low, hollow, and murmuring, but musical tone struck his ear.

Conway was neither weak, nor credulous, nor superstitious: yet in his calmest moments he might have been surprised, though not dismayed, at circumstances so wonderful, and which carried with them unquestionably a supernatural appearance; but the slow fever that had long preyed on his spirits, had risen to delirium, and at that moment

he knew not whether he really existed, or whether he was not a shade like that he had been pursuing.

As he proceeded, the aërial sounds continued to float towards him, till at last a small ray of light from the door above pointed out to him Ethelreda's habitation.

Without hesitating, he ascended to the door; it was half open. The clear, strong light of a lamp which hung over the table, plainly discovered to him the figure of a woman leaning her face on both her hands, which rested on the table. He instantly comprehended it was the same phantom that had already appeared to him; but not daring to advance, lest the very air he breathed should dissolve the unsubstantial vision, he stood leaning forward, his eyes fixed, and motionless as a statue; and his mind so agitated at the idea of seeing her fade from before him a second time (for

in

in reality his sight began to fail, from the intentness with which he gazed), as to produce a convulsive tremor, which caused his teeth to knock together with so much violence, that Ethelreda, disturbed and terrified, raised her head and beheld—not Conway—but a spectre that would have appalled the most intrepid!

His countenance, though it displayed nothing of terror, was pale, exhausted, and ghastly; his eyes so eager and piercing they seemed more than human; his mouth half open; his hand raised; his whole figure representing a man rapidly advancing to speak, but so entirely motionless as to give no idea of an animated body.

Ethelreda, in horror, tried to pass him and escape at the door. He too was roused at seeing her move: he suddenly stepped back, the door fell together; she shrieked, and would have retreated.

By an involuntary emotion he stretched out his hands towards her; again he reproached the delusive shade, he implored her to return; and so strong was the force of imagination, that he held the real Ethelreda in his arms without perceiving for a moment that he had not grasped at an airy phantom.

Doubt and suspense at last gave way to certainty, and almost to joy. "You live again!—You breathe!" cried Conway, repeatedly; but Ethelreda, motionless and nearly lifeless, could neither speak nor release herself from his hold. "Let us go, let us fly this moment from this grave," continued he, leading her towards the door.

"Who *are* you?" said Ethelreda, finding utterance.

"Who am I!" repeated he, in a tone not to be described.

"I know! I know you are—but how altered——"

"Not

“Not *here*, Ethelreda!” pressing her hand to his heart. “Let us not delay a moment.”

She hung back, and in a voice scarcely articulate, but firm and decisive, said, “Go you instantly. My prayers, my best wishes shall always follow you; but to see you again would be my death!”

Again Conway's features were distorted with horror and surprise: “The sight of me is become hateful to you?—You shall see me no more,” he exclaimed in a frantic tone, retreating from her some paces as he spoke, and seizing the pistol he had relinquished: “You shall see me no more!” he repeated, in a voice almost drowned in convulsive agitation.

Ethelreda sprung towards him, and, seizing both his hands, tried in vain to utter a sound. Conway, distracted as he was, could not but perceive the agonies of distress that varied her counte-

nance to every shade of horror. He entreated; he besought her to speak, and promised to submit to her will unconditionally—but with so little calmness or coherence, that Ethelreda, not re-assured by his manner, still hesitated, neither daring to remonstrate against his violence, nor to repeat her command. After many efforts to speak, she entreated him to be calm, to hear her patiently, nor to add to her sufferings by his frantic grief, which had already terrified and distracted her.

Conway, alarmed at the preamble, protested even with oaths he would not leave her.

“Hear me!—but hear me!” she cried, whilst she saw all Conway’s ungovernable passions rising in his countenance; “hear but this last time what I have to urge, and you yourself shall determine.”

“Oh! I guess all that you can urge!”

urge!" cried Conway; "but I solemnly swear——"

"Stop—if you value my peace—at least till you have heard me speak," said Ethelreda, interrupting him.—"I will not reproach you, nor increase the agitation of your mind by regretting my own misfortunes. They commenced long before I knew you; but, separated as we are, I have a right to demand of you some sacrifice in return for those I have made."

"Who says we are separated?—Who shall dare to separate us?" reiterated Conway in the most piercing tone.

"*Separated as we have long been,*" continued Ethelreda, "you were free to form new engagements. I myself am witness to your marriage this morning. The sacrifice I ask is a promise, in the most serious and solemn manner given, that you will return to your family, determined to subdue your passions, and

fixed never to make a second attempt to see me. You will drive me from this last refuge. I repeat to you, it would be impossible."

"It is true," cried Conway, attempting to conceal the impression her commands had made upon him, "till within this hour I believed you no longer existed; it is true, I consented to this marriage, from which nevertheless I have sworn to release myself. I meant to keep my oath; but you, Ethelreda—you will preserve me from it without perjury."

"Conway," said Ethelreda with assumed courage, "I remind you of your promise."

"What promise have I given? What desperate promise would you oblige me to keep?" cried he, relapsing into fury. "Cruel and unrelenting as you are! I see you, and I have forgotten the phrensy that seized me, when you left me

me in ignorance of your fate, wrapped in the mystery of disguise.—I have forgotten all the sorrows I but this morning endured whilst I deplored your death. Yet you talk of new sacrifices—more excruciating!—But I steadfastly resolve never to give you up—I will never leave you—I will die at your feet—I have not the courage to make any other sacrifice!”

“You will see me expire, if you persist in this cruel persecution!” cried Ethelreda, too firmly persuaded of his resolution to conceal her own agitation.

“My peace of mind, my honour, depend on you—and yet you will not be prevailed on to leave me—to relinquish your fatal purpose against yourself—Remember how solemn is the engagement that divides us:—You are married.”

“You forget that we are united by the same engagements, more solemn, because our hearts entered into the

agreement, than a mere ceremony now no longer binding."

"Your own argument condemns you," said Ethelreda, almost exhausted with the contention: "I am no longer bound by those engagements which I entered into against my judgment, but with my whole heart."—"Oh, Conway! you know that from me you are free—you know I am no longer your wife!"

"Your heart declares in my favour!" exclaimed Conway—"I ask no other testimony. To know that you live, and that you prefer me—yet to leave you for ever in the power of a wretch!—Oh Ethelreda! my senses depend on you—Go with me, or let me die—or hear me rave, and perhaps in my extravagance accuse you of my misfortunes.—Is not your honour mine? Is not your peace my peace?—Oh, do not—" continued he in a supplicating tone, "do not have to reproach yourself with my eter-

nal

nal destruction!—Will it not be consolation sufficient to such a mind as yours, my Ethelreda, that you have preserved a soul?"—Whilst he yet spoke he had supported her to the door.

Ethelreda no longer resisted his entreaties; she burst into tears, which she tried in vain to suppress—"If my grief should become irksome—if it should appear only as a reproach to you, not the effect of my own weakness, you will lament your infatuation when it is too late."

"I have but one answer," said Conway in a gloomy tone, putting at the same time the pistol to his head.—Ethelreda shrieked faintly, and, hiding her face in her gown, stifled her tears, nor suffered another sigh to interrupt the silence of their melancholy march through the subterraneous passage.

At last they reached the library; and Ethelreda, who had taken upon herself

to be the guide, with trembling steps led the way to the deserted apartments, where she had so recently suffered the most terrible fears at the sight of Carloville, from whose power she so unexpectedly rescued herself, little imagining her fate had still more distressing events in reserve for her, and that Conway—Conway whom she so much loved—should be the instrument.

They traversed the gloomy apartments, one after the other, without any impediment; whilst Ethelreda, still averse to the step she was about to take, dared not trust her voice with a sound, lest it should betray the sensations that agitated her; but pointing to the doors through which they were to pass, Conway in equally dreary silence advanced to open them; and though he knew not what could be the end of going through these forsaken rooms, which he had never remembered as leading to any way out
of

of the Castle, he trusted implicitly to his guide, whose repugnance he saw, but dared not suspect her sincerity. Conway, whose heart was as generous as his temper was impetuous, grown somewhat calmer by Ethelreda's compliance with his frantic proposals, could not but reflect, as his reason returned, on the extraordinary sacrifice he had demanded of her; nor could he fail to perceive how deeply his distress must have affected her, since, in spite of her judgment, which could not be convinced, and her principles, which he now plainly perceived, notwithstanding all her efforts, revolted from the compliance he had extorted from her, she was prepared follow and be controuled by him, though he read a thousands melancholy fears and presages in every varying expression of her countenance.

Whilst Conway, free from passion, and unblinded

unblinded by any selfish motive, made these observations, and drew conclusions from them no longer irritated by opposition, his intellects regained the energy they had nearly lost; he revolved in his mind his own conduct, and blushed with shame to see that the violence of his passions had made him selfish and unfeeling; whilst Ethelreda, wrought upon by his phrensy, had consented to devote herself to everlasting regret.

To perceive an error in his heart was with Conway to abjure it; but still they went on, and ascended the little turret which led to the roofs of the Castle. When they reached the door, Conway stopped; Ethelreda, perceiving he did not advance, passed him, and, having opened it, would have put out the lamp.

“Not yet!” said Conway, preventing her, and turning away his face to conceal

ceal the tears he could not suppress,
and the cold drops that stood on his
forehead.

Ethelreda looked at him earnestly ; but
not daring to ask his meaning, she led
the way through the windings of the
battlements till they came to a flight of
stone stairs on the outside of the Castle,
probably made for the accommodation
of the archers who formerly defended
its walls.

Ethelreda, who still went first, was
the first to perceive the crowd assembled
in the Castle court as she looked over
the parapet ; and instantly retreating at
the sound of their voices, and at the
name of Carloville often repeated, she
turned her eyes on Conway, scarcely
knowing whether to rejoice at the impe-
diment to their proceeding for her own
sake, or to lament it for his.

“ This then is the way I am to go ? ”
said he, taking her hand in both his, and
holding

holding it to his heart; “and when I have for ever passed these walls, who shall guide me?—who will shield me from my own impetuosity?—Think of me—let me have your prayers.” He turned to go: for a moment Ethelreda stood suspended in her resolution—but almost instantly relapsing into her former fears for his safety, “Let me follow you!” she cried, choked by her tears, and contending with her own forebodings.

“No, do not follow me!” said Conway more calmly—“I no longer ask it of you. My family, my country, are nothing to me; in you I saw every thing: I will make one effort for you, who have not only given up every connection, but even your liberty.—I cannot equal—let me at least try to imitate you; I have been selfish, I will not be unjust;—tell me where I shall go—advise me for the last time.”

Whilst Conway was earnestly speaking, yet pausing and hesitating in order to

lengthen

lengthen the few short moments he had to spend with Ethelreda, the voices became still louder and more clamorous, and, distant as they were, they distinctly heard the names of Carlovile and Lady Marianne repeated in different tones and voices; but above all they particularly distinguished that of Lord Caerleon by turns questioning the servants, and contending with Sir Francis, who, as well as they could gather, was averse to a pursuit.

At once new ideas and new hopes flashed on Conway's mind, that sparkled in his eye, and gave an air of wildness to his countenance that half terrified Ethelreda, who, not so easily raised from sadness to joy, could not account for his ecstasies, or how so sudden a transition had been produced on a mind but the moment before depressed and sunk to the lowest pitch of despondence.

“ If

“If there be truth in presages or portents,” said Conway, once more seizing her hand and pressing it to his heart—and then, without finishing the sentence, “Farewell! my own Ethelreda!” he cried, and, rapidly descending the stone stairs, presently mingled among the crowd below.

Ethelreda, lost in a variety of perplexing thoughts which bewildered her the more she considered, approached the parapet in order to listen; but the sounds grew lower and more indistinct, and presently the lights and the whole party disappeared.

Conway had no sooner left Ethelreda than her thoughts once more returned to the subject that had engrossed them the whole day; her having been discovered by Carloville. In flying from him she had taken refuge in the church, where she had seen the ceremony of Conway's marriage

marriage with Lady Octavia; and, deceived by the departure of the others, had incautiously shewn herself to Conway, whom she immediately perceived, and instantly retreated; fearing nothing so much as being discovered by him, particularly as she was now circumstanced, under the necessity of seeking a refuge without the walls of the Castle, where she had been so long and so safely protected. She still debated whether she should remain another night; but determined not to decide without the advice of Llewellyn, as indeed without his assistance it would have been impossible for her to escape, and conceal herself in the neighbourhood till some means should present themselves of retreating entirely. As she returned to her cell, a thousand projects occurred to her, which she rejected as impracticable; half-rejoicing she had it still in her power to withdraw

withdraw herself entirely from Conway's pursuit whilst such strong impediments existed to separate them, and half sorry the idea had presented itself at all.

When she reached her prison, scared, terrified, and not daring to trust his senses, Llewellyn came to meet her—unable to express his surprise and joy at seeing her again, or his terror at having lost her; for it was he who, having alarmed Conway by moving behind the hangings; was mistaken by him for Carlville, and pursued through the vault till he availed himself of the passage that led to the church, and by that means escaped the fate that otherwise would certainly have befallen him.

When Llewellyn could articulate, he related to his mistress the full extent of his fears; which, on finding her abode dark and deserted, immediately represented to him that she had been seized
and

and carried off by Carloville's orders, who had discovered her retreat, and had himself departed before hand in order to dispose of her where she might never more molest him.

He then informed her of the report, in circulation in the house, of her death; which he had always looked upon as a malicious invention of the servants; but which he now believed was meant to answer some particular purpose. The idea too struck Ethelreda; she tried in vain to penetrate it, nor could Llewellyn assist her. At all events she concluded herself no longer safe in the precincts of the Castle; and having entreated Llewellyn to procure her some means of retreating, either by a boat under the Castle walls, or in any other way he could devise, she declared her intention of departing by means of the trap-door communicating with the upper room in the tower, the door

door of which opened into the park ;
a short distance either from the sea or
the village, and much less exposed to
discovery than any of the ways through
the Castle.

CHAP. LI.

Nescio quod certè est, quod me tibi temperat, astrum.

PERSIUS.

ON leaving Ethelreda so instantaneously, and with so little ceremony, Conway mingled with the party in the Castle-court. A thousand confused and extraordinary ideas rushing through his mind, prevented him from staying one moment to communicate them to her : indeed, so rapid were the conclusions he had drawn; that he left her without any of those violent sensations that usually accompany a final separation—he left her inwardly prepossessed there would be nothing to prevent their meeting in future. He had entirely forgotten Octavia.

Lord Caerleon and Sir Francis L'Es-
terling were questioning and cross-ex-
mining

mining the servants when Conway joined them; but nothing could be gained from their answers that was at all conclusive—though the account they gave of both having departed before any of the inhabitants of the Castle were stirring, was to Caerleon a corroborating circumstance which justified all his suspicions, and left him no plea to doubt of the step his sister had taken. Mr. Fitz-Piers, amongst the other gentlemen whom the disturbance had collected, was in vain trying to soothe Lord Caerleon, who one moment swore to execute the bitterest vengeance on the delinquents, and the next attacking Sir Francis with almost equal virulence, severely upbraided him with his folly and want of spirit, in the most cutting and provoking terms.

Sir Francis, in the mean time, was in the coolest and most unconcerned manner arranging in his pocket book what
little

little information he could collect from the servants, without attempting to answer one single syllable to all the reproaches Caerleon bestowed upon him. Conway, more eager than either to know the most minute circumstance, had by turns attended to each; but finding it equally impossible to gain any thing from Caerleon's rage, or Sir Francis's stupidity, he addressed himself to Fitz-Piers; who clearly related to him, as he had collected them from the two gentlemen, their suspicions, and how far they were confirmed; adding, he believed the intention of Lord Caerleon was to pursue them immediately with Sir Francis, provided the latter could be prevailed on to accompany him. "I am sorry to acknowledge," continued Fitz-Piers, "that I am a relation of Carlovill's; but that shall not prevent me from offering my services to Lord Caerleon in

any way he will dictate. I am ready this moment to join in the pursuit."

Conway instantly declared the same intention; and Caerleon seizing Sir Francis roughly by the arm, and turning him half round, stared full in his face for half a minute, and, turning on his heel with a contemptuous sneer, told Conway and Fitz-Piers he should be glad of either of their services.

Sir Francis in the mean time had made up his mind to accompany Lord Caerleon. "Neither Mr. Fitz-Piers nor Captain Conway will dispute that I have the best right to pursue Lady Mariamne," cried Sir Francis, stepping before them and Caerleon. "I have only one condition to make with you, my Lord; if they should take it into their heads to go and hide at that cursed Pæstum Posidonium, I must and will decline following them. I admire antiquity,

tiquity, I worship architecture; but I am not so much in love with the clumsy Doric as to expose myself a second time to the malafia."

"If you go with me, you shall search for them in the bowels of Vesuvius, but you shall find them!" vociferated Caerleon, laughing in the midst of his rage.

"Agreed!" cried Sir Francis: "I have no choice about the mountains; Vesuvius or Gibello are equal to me—Empedocles and Pliny like, let's be off!"—and immediately followed without any further preliminaries.

Neither Conway nor Fitz-Piers could object, but both were disappointed, at not succeeding in their proposal; and Conway, who was bent on it at all events, declared his intention, and was going, in order as speedily as possible to make preparations, when Fitz-Piers

again offered himself, and was thankfully accepted.

Fitz-Piers instantly ordered his own chaise, and both adjourned to the stables; where, without scruple or ceremony, Conway chose out four of Carlovill's finest horses, and himself assisted the grooms in harnessing them with all possible expedition, whilst with some presence of mind he dispatched servants to provide relays on the road — making light, in the ardour of his hopes, of the many hours start they had of them, and of their entire ignorance of the route they had taken; though both himself and Fitz-Piers were unanimous in the opinion that they had made for the Continent by the way of Hamburgh; particularly Fitz-Piers, who, knowing with what facility Carlovill could adopt the disguise of a foreigner, made no doubt that such were his intentions; which once effected,

effected, he declared he should have no farther hope of his detection. But Conway, more sanguine because more deeply interested, swore solemnly, no circumstances, however discouraging, should oblige him to relinquish the pursuit.

Fitz-Piers, whose purposes towards his cousin, though he execrated his conduct, were by no means hostile, made it his first request to Conway not to furnish himself with pistols; who immediately complied, declaring it was by no means his design to deprive Sir Francis L'Esterling and Lord Caerleon of the right of revenging themselves, though he avowedly joined them that Carloville might not escape and hide himself from their vengeance. Conway forbore to add the most powerful argument to his ready compliance, that he dared not trust himself, lest in the delirium of his rage some rash act might for ever raise an in-

superable bar betwixt him and his hopes
—hopes, wild, mad and irreconcilable
as they were, that gave new life and
strength to his frame, and vigour to his
intellects.

CHAP.

C H A P. LH.

— be not over exquisite.

To cast the fashion of uncertain evils;
For grant they be so, while they rest unknown,
What need a man forestall his date of grief,
And run to meet what he would most avoid?—

MILTON.

THE family at Strathener Castle had long waited in the most tormenting state of anxiety and suspense, expecting hour after hour the return of the last messenger from Casino Belvedere, or that Sir Francis L'Esterling and Lord Caerleon would return, or send some one with dispatches from St. Siffrid's.

Lord Trecastle, whose natural impatience did not require the stimulating additions of a lurking fit of the gout, and expected ill tidings of the most serious nature, continued to traverse the

room as well as he was able, with his watch in his hand, counting the tedious half-hours till the messenger arrived; whom he repeatedly threatened he would dismiss his service for not performing his duty with more expedition. Mrs. Conway, who had once or twice drawn upon herself the most peevish answers to questions the most kindly intended, could ill conceal her own particular uneasiness. The dinner had been announced more than once; but Lord Treastle, forgetting it was Lady Octavia's wedding-day, roughly reprimanded the servant, declaring he would not sit down to table: indeed Lady Octavia had not made her appearance since the news of her sister's flight; which had so entirely engrossed Lord Treastle's thoughts, that neither Octavia, nor Conway, nor their marriage, had once occurred to him.

But both Mr. and Mrs. Conway knew that their son had not been at Strathener since

since his marriage. The apparent length of the ceremony had surprised them: Octavia's grief and sullenness had added to their alarm; for she had refused to answer a single question, having shut herself up in her own dressing-room from the moment of her return.

Caerleon was too much enraged and irritated at the news that awaited him to mention Conway; and both Mr. and Mrs. Conway sympathised too much with him and his father, in the calamity that had befallen them, and indeed their whole family, to trouble him with interrogatories. But, as it grew still later, and night advanced, the fears and apprehensions of each increased. Mr. Conway, in spite of all his efforts, could not prevent his thoughts from dwelling on his son's words in their last conversation on the subject of his marriage with Octavia; words which were deeply fixed on his memory, often as he had tried to

drive them thence. "You will remember it with horror!" incessantly he repeated to himself, and shuddered with terror as he repeated them, and almost penetrated their terrible meaning.

Mrs. Conway had several times quitted the room to make enquiries, unperceived by Lord Treastle, anxious not to add to his grief by any fresh cause of apprehension. She had scarcely reached a vestibule, through which she was going to another room, when the messenger, that instant returned from Casino Belvedere, rapidly passed her towards the room where his Lord so impatiently waited. Just as he reached the door, Mrs. Conway called to him to desist, presaging the whole truth, yet not daring to ask, and fearing the effect it might have on an old man of violent passions like Lord Treastle. But the man, in too much haste to attend to her, opened the door; and had no sooner abruptly declared that

that neither her Ladyship nor Lord Carloville had been seen by any part of Sir Francis's household, than Lord Treastle, after several efforts as if to interrupt the relation, fell down speechless in a fit.

Mr. Conway rung the bell, and called aloud for assistance. The servants came running from every part of the house; and Mrs. Conway, seeing him stretched on the floor, concluded he was dying or dead, and ran towards Lady Octavia's apartment in order to prevent her from suddenly hearing it from the servants. The door was shut, but not locked. Mrs. Conway opened it; but finding it dark and silent, passed through to another room, still in expectation of seeing her: but in vain—all the rooms usually occupied by Lady Octavia were silent and empty; and Mrs. Conway, surprised, though more than half-prepared for something extraordinary, rang the bell, and enquired of the woman who answered

swered it, for Lady Octavia or her maid? "Lady Octavia's maid had not been seen by the other servants in the house for some hours—she was supposed to be in her lady's rooms."

Mrs. Conway, accompanied by some of the women, walked through all the rooms in the Castle; not that she had the smallest expectation of success from the search she was making, for from the first moment she conjectured Octavia had taken her departure, though she wearied herself in guessing the motive; and had not the time materially disagreed with that of Lady Mariamne's flight, she would have concluded, to a positive certainty, that it was pre-concerted between the two sisters to go off together. But that was impossible: Lady Mariamne, she was positively assured, had eloped with Lord Carloville: Lady Octavia, it appeared, had taken her servant with her; and Conway too was missing:

missing: yet it was extremely improbable they were gone together—and the only plausible reason that could be assigned for the absence of either, was, that they wished to avoid each other.

After an ineffectual search through all the rooms for Lady Octavia, who was nowhere to be found, Mrs. Conway directly communicated the extraordinary intelligence of his niece's flight to Mr. Conway, who, in the midst of his perplexity, immediately thought of pursuing her, till he recollected that scarcely a horse or even a servant remained in the house that was not engaged or already disabled; for he had dispatched some to the nearest towns for any medical assistance that could be procured; and others to Frampton-lodge with a carriage for Dr. Felton, who he hoped was not already gone. For a moment he lamented that circumstances should every way concur to prevent him; but
instantly

instantly all his terrible apprehensions for Conway returned—"She is of but little consequence to me now!" he unconsciously exclaimed in a tone of deep distress but ill disguised, and turned away.

Mrs. Conway clearly comprehended his meaning referred to Conway: a damp of horror seemed to strike to her heart; but not daring through excess of apprehension to ask for any explanation that might confirm her terrors, she continued to wander the whole night from her own room to Lord Treastle's—where Mr. Conway sat up—enduring the most poignant distress, yet not daring to give it utterance lest some dreadful confirmation should follow. One moment, flattered by a distant sound, she would impatiently listen at the window; and the next, alarmed at a whisper or a breath in the room of the invalid, almost to convulsions. The tedious long
night

night at last wore away ; but the grey dawn of the morning seemed to bring with it a still more melancholy and desponding aspect, when Mrs. Conway, tired and exhausted, yet not inclined to sleep, endeavoured to relieve her weariness by walking into the air, cheerless and lowering as it was : scarcely able to support herself, and shivering with cold and apprehensions, she walked across a lawn to a little gate leading into some fields, through which a pathway reached to St. Siffrid's.

Mrs. Conway stood some moments, her eyes directed forwards though without looking, till at last a woman, who had approached close to the gate without being perceived by her, ventured to ask leave to pass. Mrs. Conway, starting, and almost screaming at the sound of a voice, turned her eyes on the woman, who, perceiving she was speaking to one of the ladies of the Castle,

Castle, began to apologize, by saying she did not expect to see any of the ladies so early; and, hesitating as if fearful of being suspected of something dishonest, produced Conway's watch, purse, and pocket-book, protesting she came purposely to return them.

Mrs. Conway glanced her eyes upon them, and instantly recognising the purse, which she had seen before, she caught hold of the woman's arm to support herself, unable to utter a syllable. The woman, alarmed at the action and at her countenance, with much consternation attempted to exculpate herself, by declaring the gentleman had thrown the things in at a window, and disappeared so speedily she could not return them; whilst Mrs. Conway, asking no other confirmation of the supposed catastrophe than the scared visage of the woman, fainted and fell on the ground. Instead of staying to assist her, the terrified

fied creature ran towards the Castle, and directed the astonished servants to the spot where Mrs. Conway continued insensible : nor till after she was removed into the house, and assisted by strong effences, did she recover her senses ; but grief and distraction not to be assuaged speedily brought on a violent fever, with symptoms threatening the most serious consequences.

It is impossible to say whether Mr. Conway felt this terrible calamity more or less acutely than his wife. Outwardly indeed he was more composed ; but internally he saw himself as the author of his own and her severest misfortunes, and prayed to be released from the dreadful conviction, whilst he execrated his avarice and ambition, now on the point of being gratified with riches and titles, become his severest scourge, his incessant torment, his bitterest reproach. “ You will remember it with horror ! ”

rung

rung upon his ear in every sound. He thought he saw it in every eye, that looked reproach, and not pity, when he turned on all sides for comfort, but could meet with none. Sometimes he thought of Octavia, and felt the stings of his conscience, which upbraided him with having obliged her to quit her father's house, and perhaps fall into still greater errors. He too, if ever he recovered his reasoning faculties, would find himself deserted and disgraced by both his children. Ingenious in torments, Mr. Conway's conscience represented to him, under every possible shape, the mischiefs he had occasioned; and such is the complicated punishment of the designing, that they become self-burthened with those faults of others for which they are not entirely accountable. This was in some degree Mr. Conway's case with respect to Octavia's flight; which was not altogether occasioned by him,

him, since she had resolved to marry the Count de Clerac; who, having obtained her promise for what he most wanted, her money, was perfectly well inclined that Conway should take the lady, and purposely avoided to interrupt the ceremony, as he had promised.

Blinded by her vanity, which more effectually disguised the Count's motives than all his own arts, Octavia persuaded herself that some unforeseen event had interfered: and, confiding in the fidelity of the Count, she resolved to fly from her father's house, and conceal herself with the utmost care; till some expedient could be devised (and such she did not doubt there were) to negotiate a separation from Conway, or rather annul her marriage, that she might bestow herself with the remainder of her fortune on the deserving and faithful Count—who would now have it in his power



power to give a glorious proof of his disinterested attachment, by marrying her when twenty thousand pounds of her fortune were in his power, without what is considered by mercenary lovers an incumbrance, or, at best, a needless appendage.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

